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FIRST THINGS

Pride and Pessimism in the Courts
WILLIAM J. STUNTZ

The Truth About *Inherit the Wind*
CAROL IANNONE

The Several-Storied Thomas Merton
ROBERT ROYAL

Catholics and the 1996 Election
JAMES T. McHUGH

The Fragmented Faith of American Jews
CLIFFORD E. LIBRACH

In on the Kill
ALAN JACOBS

Also: James Nuechterlein on Bias and the Press
Mary Ann Glendon on Christopher Lasch · John J. Reilly on
Harold Bloom · Matthew Scully · Norman Ravitch · Edward T. Oakes

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Richard John Neuhaus
The Public Square
A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life

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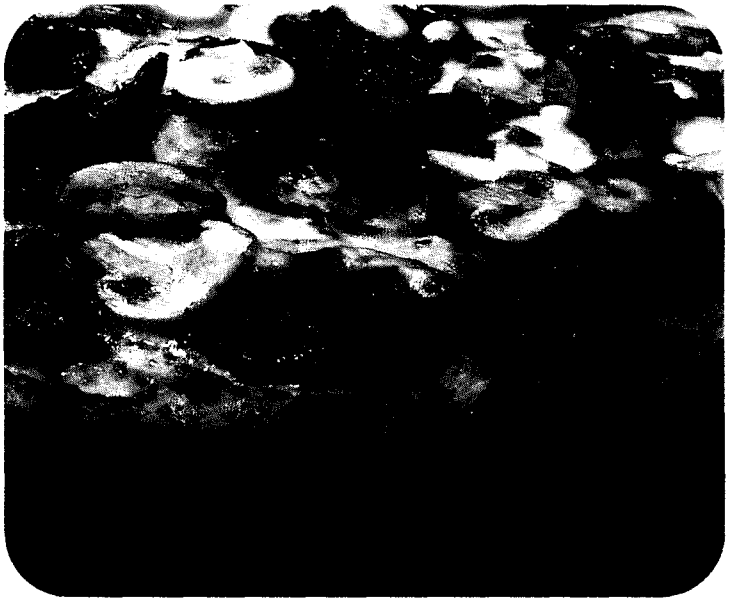

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FIRST THINGS

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Correspondence

"The End of Democracy?"

Your symposium "The End of Democracy? The Judicial Usurpation of Politics" (November 1996) did a great service by sounding the alarm about the risks and costs associated with the farce that is modern American constitutional law. Judges have claimed the power to make our moral choices for us, and, thus far, we have permitted them to do so. As a result, our pretensions to self-government are increasingly hollow, as is our public morality. This state of affairs is indefensible. It persists only because so many people view it as an immutable part of the political landscape. Unfortunately, your symposium did little to dispel that misunderstanding.

It was a theme of the symposium that there is no good remedy for judicial usurpation of power. Your introduction expresses certainty that the judiciary has abused its power but says, "Like our authors, we are much less certain about what can or should be done about it." Later you summarize the remedies considered in the symposium, "ranging from noncompliance to resistance to civil disobedience to morally justified revolution." All of these options are extralegal, some are catastrophic. Nowhere do you or your authors consider the possibility that a practical remedy for judicial overreaching is built into our Constitution. . . .

The framers may never have anticipated the bold claim of authority Chief Justice John Marshall made in *Marbury v. Madison*, but they believed that the judiciary could not, under any circumstances, threaten self-government because the constitutional plan made it utterly dependent on the other branches of government. As Alexander Hamilton said in *The Federalist*, No. 78, "The judiciary . . . has no influence over either the sword or the purse. . . . It may truly be said to have neither force nor will, but merely judgment; and must ultimately depend upon the aid of the executive arm even for the efficacy of its judgments."

What the framers failed to anticipate was that the "executive arm" would slavishly enforce any error the judiciary chose to pass off as constitutional interpretation. Hamilton assumed that the executive would independently assess the merits of what the Supreme Court had to say, and if the Court was out of line, the executive would ignore it. If our practice were in accord with this assumption, the Court could not threaten the foundations of democracy in America. The fact that it does should not be taken as evidence of a defect in the constitutional scheme, only as the occasion for a small adjustment in our constitutional practice.

We need to restore the power of the executive to determine for itself whether judicial decisions merit enforcement and to deny enforcement to those decisions that do not. This power is inherent in the constitutional design. Without it, that design is suicidal, a futile effort at self-government doomed to end in a judicial oligarchy. The President of the United States is the head of a coequal branch of government. He cannot uphold the dignity of his office and fulfill his oath to preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution and, at the same time, subordinate his own judgment regarding constitutional interpretation to the Supreme Court. All it would take to confine the courts within their proper boundaries would be a President with the courage and vision to maintain those boundaries. . . .

J. Peter Mulhern
Bowie, MD

. . . Any notion of Christian "moral legitimacy" to government or governing authorities must always be provisional, not absolute. Most American Christians have not taken the time or effort to reflect seriously on the whole of New Testament teaching regarding the state and our individual and corporate responses to it. The writers of the New Testament, in my view, indicate that no matter what government Christians find themselves under, they are to live responsibly (pay taxes, give proper

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respect to governing authorities, and comply with just laws). At the same time, the New Testament clearly teaches that all governing authority is temporal and ultimately bounded by God's authority. As Christians, our allegiance to any government is at best provisional and always defined by our ultimate loyalty to God and his purposes.

Our lack of biblical reflection has meant that American Christians have vacillated between one approach that sees the United States as a special dispensation in God's economy (the temptation of many within the Christian Coalition) and another that views this nation as the source of much of the contemporary evil in our world (the view that drives much of the religious left). Historical reality is much more complex than either position allows for, and it is only through sustained and thoughtful reflection on the biblical witness that Christians can articulate and practice a responsible personal and social witness in our present historical situation. . . .

Robert J. Mayer
Charlotte, NC

Regarding your symposium, I found the tone, much of the content, and the apparent intent outrageously intemperate and irresponsible.

I cannot but wonder, if recent judicial decisions had been more in keeping with the views of the symposium participants and of the editors of FIRST THINGS, that there would have been proposals "ranging from noncompliance to resistance to civil disobedience to morally justified revolution." I am appalled! There are reasonable and responsible alternatives to what you propose, including the very obvious one of persuading legislators to address the issues raised by *Casey* (1992) and other judicial decisions. The constitutional system has not collapsed. We simply need to insist that our elected representatives see to it that it function democratically and effectively. And that insistence goes well beyond legitimate concerns about the federal judiciary. . . .

Robert W. Heywood
Flint, MI

Shame on Robert Bork for playing politician and not scholar in his article "Our Judicial Oligarchy." He claims in short that democracy has met its demise at the hands of a liberal Supreme Court. . . .

What role the unelected judicial branch should play in American government is a question of supreme importance. The Supreme Court has unprincipally asserted itself for causes liberal, conservative, and otherwise. This should concern anyone who values democracy. Mr. Bork's real concern, however, is the perpetuation of traditional values, which is a valid but completely different issue. Mr. Bork and the editors of FIRST THINGS should be more honest.

Kenneth C. Hardy
Long Beach, CA

All five essays in your November symposium were thought-provoking. I didn't agree with all of the suggestions presented in them, but I wrestled with them all—which I assume was the aim of the exercise. I am puzzled by the vehement reaction it evoked from some in the conservative camp.

What is conservatism? Surely not an abstract, objectless doctrine. Conservatism aims to conserve things, especially the vital cultural traditions of our civilization. Among those traditions—central to them, I would contend—is the proposition that "laws" that aren't really laws but usurpations of legitimate authority are unjust, and unjust laws are not morally binding. This is the core argument of all five essays, and if it is a "radical" proposition, I will inform my radical friends that they now have to include St. Thomas Aquinas, St. Augustine, and the Old and New Testament in their canon. Perhaps there is a place for them there (Aquinas went so far as to call an unjust law "an act of violence"), but I seem to remember my conservative friends also considering them worthy of serious study.

As a living doctrine, conservativsm is hearty, robust, and challenging. It is not to be confused with timidity.

George McKenna
Tenafly, NJ

I write to commend and thank you for publishing the symposium on "The End of Democracy?" In my opinion, this is the most important and needed project you have ever done, and thinking and concerned Americans should applaud and become activated by this most serious and thoughtful discourse.

My hope is that it will be widely circulated, reprinted, and become the subject of consideration in legislative bodies, law schools, religious organizations, and civic groups, so that the analyses and warnings of the dangers and threatened end of our democratic experiment will not be ignored. My fear is that the current culture is such that the authors and thoughtful conservatives will be condemned, demonized, and marginalized as radicals and extremists for daring to discuss these issues.

Melvin J. Spencer
Oklahoma City, OK

I read the symposium on "The End of Democracy?" in the Westchester County Jail completing part of a five-day sentence for disorderly conduct. Bishop George Lynch, Brother Fidelis Moscinski, CFR, and I were arrested in front of a notorious abortuary in Dobbs Ferry, New York, for attempting to dissuade people from killing children. In fact our disorderly conduct was quietly saying the rosary while sitting in the driveway of this place where children were actually being dismembered at that moment. A representative of this agency admitted in federal court that they performed third trimester abortions, that is, the killing of viable children separated from the protection of law only by their mother's womb and the hideous legal fiction that they are not human beings.

As I sat reading in my cell, each article of the symposium took on greater significance, with one writer after another describing in legal and philosophical terms the origins of our constitutional crisis. This crisis has lead to the legalized murder of infants and is now threatening to extend to the chronically ill and the aged. . . .

At the entrance to the huge mili-

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tary cemetery above Honolulu there is a sign that reads, "War is ultimately a spiritual problem." . . . To paraphrase the cemetery sign, "Abortion, euthanasia, and the constitutional crisis are ultimately spiritual problems." We Americans with our hedonism and moral relativism are the real causes of the constitutional crisis.

(The Rev.) Benedict J. Groeschel, CFR
Larchmont, NY

I have practiced law for over twenty-one years and I completely agree with the major thrust of the symposium—American courts, particularly the federal courts, have abandoned the concepts of rule of law and limited government under constitutionally delegated authority. In many instances they have substituted rule by judicial fiat.

However, if our nation does face the end of democracy, and I fear it does, I submit that the problem cannot be traced simply to usurpation of power by the judiciary. That is merely a symptom of the disease, and the prognosis is extremely grim.

Our founding fathers recognized that limited, constitutional government by majority rule was possible only for a people imbued with certain concepts of the obligations of a citizen, and subject to restraints imposed by an authority higher than government. Even the deists among our founders would have agreed that these concepts of duty and restraint were based on the Christian faith. . . .

I think there is a universal tendency in mankind that will always worship the greatest force, and in America that greatest force appears to be the force of secular government.

Steven Kropelnicki, Jr.
Asheville, NC

For a small but growing number of conservatives today, there comes a terrible moment when one realizes that America is not just illegitimate in isolated pockets (as many conservatives have long believed), but that it is in some sense *fundamentally* illegitimate, because its *dominant institutions and ideals* have become illegitimate. For me, this epiphany came with the Supreme Court's decision against the Virginia Military Institute last June, and the broad public acceptance, even celebration, of that decision. At the time I said to friends: "We're not living in a free country any more, we're living under a tyranny." . . .

The importance of such insights—painful though they may be to those who want to believe in America—cannot be overstated. The fact that we are no longer living under a free government based, however indirectly or unofficially, on Christian morality, but under an entrenched countercultural tyranny, makes the usual conservative slogans and solutions *meaningless*. We need a whole new politics, aimed at dismantling the illegitimate powers that the federal courts have usurped over the past sixty years and at directly challenging the culture of decadence enshrined in the schools and the media. Without such a counterrevolutionary politics, to go on speaking of conservative goals like "remoralizing society" or "returning to the limited government of the Constitution" is to indulge in empty rhetoric.

Indeed, the extreme distress of leading establishment conservatives over the FIRST THINGS "End of Democracy?" symposium spectacularly confirms the suspicion, long held by some on the right, that those conservatives' opposition to liberalism is at bottom only an intellectual game. They don't want to face the truth of how corrupt and illegitimate our regime has become, because that would require them to challenge it *seriously*. As their indignant denunciations of the symposium suggest, the only thing these conservatives really want to conserve is the existing left/liberal system, and their own comfortable (if essentially powerless) places within it. . . .

Lawrence Auster
New York, NY

I'm finishing my third reading of your symposium and I can't think of enough good things to say about it. But the more I think about the Supreme Court's dictum in *Casey* ("At the heart of liberty is the right to define one's own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life."), also taken up by the Circuit Courts of Appeal in the assisted suicide rulings, there's either less to it than appears, or it's much worse than that.

The heart of liberty as defining one's concept of existence? What does it mean, in a secular understanding, to define a personal concept of existence? You either exist or you don't, what's to conceptualize? Is there a grey area in between?

And how can suicide be a defining of one's concept of existence? If you're dead, you have no existence to define. The first rule of logic is that a thing cannot both be and not be at the same time. Oh, but that's Scholasticism, which is disallowed on the grounds of religious motivation.

The heart of liberty as defining one's concept of meaning? At the heart of madness lies the fact that one's concept of meaning has been defined privately. Madness is the privatization of meaning. The ancient Greek word for a private person was *idiotes*. According to the Supreme Court's dictum, the most free person in the world would be the schizophrenic. This isn't freedom, it's solipsism.

The heart of liberty as defining one's concept of the universe? Do astrophysicists define their personal concept of the universe? Or do they try to discover and explain what is really there for the benefit of all? Why does the Court bother to elevate the legal status of fictional constructs of the universe? Is it the juridically correct understanding that the universe is an occasion for the projection of fantasies?

So, apparently illogic and insanity are the only legally permissible meanings of meaning. As to "the mystery of human life," where to even begin, except to say that if the justices would recognize the natural right to life, they might not find it such a mystery. . . .

Frank Medlar
Chestnut Hill, MA

Thank you for your brilliant and most appropriate symposium. Thank you for saying what has been on the minds of so many of us.

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Having read the article on the symposium by David Brooks in the *Weekly Standard*, I know that you are taking many hits, but I believe it is our old friends who are abandoning you who are wrong in this instance.

How are we to demonstrate the truth to our children who must be raised in this philistine culture? How do we pass on the faith to them?

If I am right about the harsh despotism that is showing signs of coming forth, I trust our old neoconservative friends will see that their self-interest, as well as the interest of constitutionalism, resides in discussing these kinds of questions.

Robert Jeffrey
Kennesaw, GA

. . . Felix Frankfurter, reflecting the constitutional sensibility of a bygone era, once observed that "the circumambient condition of the Constitution is federalism." The contemporary judiciary, in a development that would have appalled Frankfurter, makes bold to offer a substitute proposition. For our present robed oligarchy, the circumambient condition of the Constitution is the "mega-right" enveloped in the "mystery passage": "the right to define one's own concept of existence."

If in common law, as its practitioners are wont to say, there is no right without a remedy, then perhaps we might similarly contend that, in constitutional law, there is no right without a reference. At one level of encounter, the "all-purpose right to define the meaning of the universe" represents a right without a reference, either in respect to procedure or in respect to substance. First, what would constitute the process according to which this right might find expression? Presumably, the process would amount to nothing more than the untutored promptings of the unfettered self. Second, given this protean provenance, what reasonable substantive content could conceivably result? In referential perspective, the mystery mega-right—since the process of its exercise would be as boundless as the myriad promptings of the myriad selves within a society, and the resultant product no less so—can mean, in hopeless indetermination, anything, at any time, under any circumstances. . . .

Edward J. McBride
Halifax, Nova Scotia

Bravo for your symposium. It makes compelling Lockean arguments that the judicial usurpers who rule us lack legitimacy. I like to say we have a system of "student government," because we are treated like high school students—able to govern ourselves only insofar as our black-robed "principals" care to let us do so.

But a more focused critique is called for both by prudence and by practicality. Political prudence requires that we affirm rather than abjure the American constitutional tradition, for it was a relatively good one of ever-expanding inclusivity up to the time of *Roe*. Practicality requires that we provide ways for ordinary citizens, rather than only for political leaders, to express that affirmation through what *Evangelium Vitae* calls "conscientious objection" to unjust laws. My proposal would be to avoid the broader issue of regime legitimacy and simply identify the concrete consequences of the fact that *Roe v. Wade* is invalid both under the Constitution and under natural law. . . .

One would hope that the Catholic bishops and other moral or religious leaders would join this educational effort and would point out, for example, that any police officer or judge who understands the invalidity of laws denying human dignity commits a legal and moral wrong in arresting or condemning rescuers at abortion clinics. Public officials could be initially excused who had made a reasonable mistake of law in reliance on the U.S. Supreme Court, though as the legal invalidity of *Roe* became more widely known, the reasonableness of such a mistake would become less and less plausible. . . .

Perhaps we and the bishops should begin with, and specifically encourage and participate in, nonviolent sit-ins to stop partial-birth abortions. Not that children partially born have a right to more protection than other unborn children, but the natural law tradition counsels active resistance to injustice only insofar as one has a reasonable hope of success without causing still greater harm. (For this reason, among others, violence must be absolutely excluded.). . .

Richard Stith
Valparaiso, IN

The symposium dramatized the dilemma of those concerned, from a faith perspective, with the future of this Republic.

Somewhere in *Democracy in America*, Alexis de Tocqueville joined the survival of the American system to popular confidence in the Supreme Court. The symposium's careful and responsible analysis of the reasons for the erosion of confidence contributes to a discussion that can only grow more insistent in the years to come. Many thanks.

(Most Reverend) Francis E. George, O.M.I.
Archbishop of Portland in Oregon

I strongly disagree with the underlying assumption of the symposium. Despite some legitimate grievances concerning some bad court decisions, I believe the judicial branch remains our "least dangerous branch." You let the other branches of our government off too easily by asking the essayists to focus exclusively on the failings of the judicial branch. . . .

Our governmental regime *is* suffering from a crisis of legitimacy, but your symposium sought to frame the issue in terms of a choice between democratic self-governance and judicial ukase. The issue should have been framed in terms of the appropriate role of government in a free society. The American experiment is not so much about democracy as much as it is about human liberty. Our Founding Fathers recognized that our inalienable rights to life, liberty, and property preceded all human legislation. They sought to create a government that would secure those rights. And by establishing limited, constitutional governments (federal and state), the Founders thought they could keep government from interfering with the way individuals choose to live their own lives. Over

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the course of the twentieth century, however, our social contract of strictly limited government has been severely breached and more and more of life's decisions have become politicized. The American people resent this loss of control over their lives—and this is why the current American regime is in a crisis of legitimacy.

Timothy Lynch
Reston, VA

Waving the Flag

Your correspondent has dispatched to Alan Jacobs ("Flags, Tradition, and Charity," November 1996) the gift of a flag—the Stars and Bars—confident that he will be able both with devotion *and* with charity to display it for the Wheaton College Dixie Club. The Stars and Bars, you see, being the first national flag of the Confederate States of America, is wholly to be distinguished from the Southern Cross—also known as the Battle Flag—which is strictly a military banner. The Stars and Bars was designed by Nicola Marschall at the behest of the Confederate Congress; the Southern Cross was designed by General P. G. T. Beauregard in response to battlefield contingencies.

One hesitates to remark the sundry other misjudgments of history that detract from Mr. Jacobs' poignant musings on an unnecessary predicament. Perhaps his misgivings with regard to Southern symbols and his Southern heritage would be happily resolved were he to consider *A Defense of Virginia (And Through Her of the South)* by the redoubtable Presbyterian divine Robert Lewis Dabney, the pertinent poems of Father Abram Ryan, Catholic priest and poet laureate of the Confederacy, and the contemporary observations on history, slavery, and the American South by David Brion Davis and (especially) Eugene Genovese. Perforce Mr. Jacobs would discover that he is anguished only by misconceptions of the Southern tradition, and that these misconceptions have been foisted upon unsuspecting generations by the overzealous victors in 1865 and by uninformed or ideologically committed zealots since.

Moreover, perhaps Mr. Jacobs would be comforted in apprehending that the resulting misconception of Southern purposes and practices has not only confounded him but also has confused and therefore misled generations of all Americans. The confusion amounts to nothing less than the loss of our actual patrimony, including a true understanding of our only original quest of a comprehensively just social and political order (see Anne Norton's *Alternative Americas* and Genovese's *The Slaveholders' Dilemma*), of our founding principles of self-government, and of inspiring examples of devout faith in the face of the ideological forces that Southerners confronted in the nineteenth century. Those forces, having prevailed over Southerners then, bedevil us all now.

Indeed, if First Things finds itself compelled (wisely and courageously) to ponder "The End of Democracy?" a Southerner might be forgiven for suggesting that it manifestly is not "democracy" that is imperiled today—would that it were so. Rather, the peril is for those remnants of the *republican* institutions (including the Constitution) that were either damaged, destroyed, or destined for dismantling by the politicians of the 1860s and thereafter who knew which Southern flags were which, what the several Southern flags meant, why they had been unfurled, and why—if the god Demos were to prevail—the symbols and thus the principles of the fighting South had to be discredited.

The long list of Supreme Court usurpations decried bravely and well by Messrs. Bork, Hittinger, Colson, Arkes, and George is the inevitable consequence of the purposes and the policies of the victors and the ideological heirs of the victors of Appomattox. Which is not at all, one must hasten to add, to diminish, let alone to condone, the admitted imperfections of the Southern past. Rather, it is to remark and to lament the gold that has been so carelessly and disastrously discarded with the dross, and also to suggest that the lead foot of a national (as distinct from a federal) tyranny, and especially of a national *judicial* tyranny, was made inevitable when Thaddeus Stevens and his cynical cohorts won and the Confederates were conquered. Now that even Virginians have shamefully forsworn their ancient credo—*sic semper tyrannis!*—and acquiesced in *United States v. Virginia*, what state, what sovereign of any sort, remains to defy Leviathan for the sake of liberty?

David A. Bovenizer
Indianapolis, IN

. . . When Alan Jacobs refers to the Stars and Bars, he is showing an ignorance of Southern history endemic to those who have not studied it. The Stars and Bars was the first national flag of the Confederate States of America. It appeared in 1861 and had three wide horizontal stripes: red across the top and bottom, and white through the middle. The canton was blue, and contained seven white stars arranged in a circle. If we took "a walk through the south side of Chicago with the Star and Bars on our (shirt) backs" as Professor Jacobs dares us to do, nothing unusual would happen.

The flag Jacobs meant when he called it a symbol of "pain," "racism," and "causing our brothers and sisters to stumble"—the flag he compares with the Nazi swastika—is the Confederate Navy and Battle Flag. It is red, with thirteen white stars on a blue St. Andrews cross edged in white. (It is worth noting here that the St. Andrews Cross is the flag of Scotland, and was chosen by the South because it belonged to an agrarian country which also fought for independence from an overbearing government.)

Professor Jacobs is remarkably concerned about symbolism, if somewhat indifferent to reality. He says "symbols have histories," and, because white supremacists have carried it, he cites "racism" and "slavery" as the message symbolized by the Confederate Flag. Would he say that, because Madonna and Mapplethorpe have adopted the cross of Christ as their "symbols," the cross now represents coarseness and obscenity and should be discarded by Christians? The enduring message of that

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ancient Scottish flag and the beautiful flag of the Confederacy is freedom from oppressive government....

I fly this beautiful banner at my home because I love it, and because there is a bit of the rebel in my tired old heart. I love it because it gives the soul a lift . . . because it whispers, "None can own your spirit." It does not speak of color; rather it touches the spark of independence which lives in us all. And when arrogant white supremacists, resentful blacks, liberal professors—or any others—would reduce this bright banner to a dark "racist symbol," I must protest that only the most grievously ignorant, the most woefully confused, and the most mindlessly hostile would participate in that effort.

Mary L. Kaoy
Otis, OR

Professor Alan Jacobs presents a new and interesting argument in suggesting that his fellow Southerners strain Christian charity when they display the Stars and Bars. Perhaps so. But he is wrong when he says the flag "was created to serve as the symbol of an institution whose members . . . agreed about the moral and legal acceptability of slaveholding."

The Stars and Bars was the Confederate battle flag, created for purposes of battlefield identification, not the lesser known Confederate national standard against the display of which he might have made a moot case since it's almost never flown today. And while there were virulent racists who fought under the Stars and Bars (as was also the case with the Stars and Stripes), one cannot accuse Southern soldiers of a blanket agreement on anything, including slaveholding. The record of their lives and letters proves otherwise.

Professor Jacobs would have been more accurate to say that the Stars and Bars was the battle flag of armies that fought primarily to resist armed invaders so that their new nation might go about its business without molestation and in peace.

Those who fly the Stars and Bars intending to give offense surely sin against Christian charity. Those who take offense where none is intended may be guilty only of ignorance.

Robert P. Hilldrup
Richmond, VA

I am a native New Englander living in Virginia, and as such I have developed a sympathy for both sides with regard to the strained feelings that still remain after the Civil War/War Between the States. Alan Jacobs expressed well some of these feelings and problems in his discussion of conflicting interpretations of the meaning of the confederate battle flag....

There is more to this issue than North vs. South rivalry. Since the defeat of the Confederacy, the nation has swung too far in the other direction, toward unitary government. The constitutional principle of federalism is all but forgotten, and the states have little power to resist the mandates of the "federal" government. The articles on the "judicial usurpation of politics" elsewhere in the journal are a good example of this problem.

I appeal to native Southerners not to let us Yankees distort your understanding of the symbolism of the flag of the Confederacy, to remember what it stands for (not racism), and to keep pride in your heritage. And Professor Jacobs: please let the students wear their club T-shirts displaying their flag!

John A. Tinkham
Virginia Beach, VA

Re Alan Jacobs' "Flags, Traditions, and Charity": To quote in part . . . "the history of a symbol is an ineradicable part of its meaning." Does Mr. Jacobs erect a Christmas tree at Christmas?

Michael L. Ward
Vero Beach, FL

Alan Jacobs replies:

My thanks to David A. Bovenizer and Mary L. Kaoy for pointing out that the Confederate battle flag is not the "Stars and Bars"—though any number of reference books (and Robert P. Hilldrup!) think it is. Interestingly, Bovenizer, Kaoy, and Hilldrup all want to inform me that the flag under discussion was the Confederate *battle* flag; apparently none of them noticed that I specifically identified it as such in my essay.

To Mr. Hilldrup: the "members" of the CSA I was referring to were not individual persons, but rather the states. To John A. Tinkham: I don't know that I have the authority to deny my students the privilege of wearing their shirts. I was making a moral and prudential argument, not justifying a commandment.

I can't respond in much detail to Mary Kaoy's letter because she hasn't actually read my essay. Apparently my argument set off so many alarms in her mind that she simply *assumed* that (for instance) if I mentioned the swastika I had to be comparing the Dixie flag to it. She picks out words that she finds offensive and quotes them without bothering to note how they were used in my sentences and in my argument. She defends her flying of the flag at her home as though I had protested against that, when in fact my argument was about what prudential and charitable rules of conduct should prevail in an overtly Christian community, which is what Wheaton College tries to be.

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In fact, it doesn't seem that *any* of my correspondents noticed that that was my purpose, which could mean that I am a very bad writer indeed. Of course, I would prefer to believe that feelings are so strong on the issues I was discussing that those feelings got in the way of careful reading.

This is not the place for further contention about the causes, results, and interpretations of what many Southerners still call "the late unpleasantness." Insistences that the war was about slavery, period, are just as tiresome as insistences that it was about states' rights, period; both do violence to a complex history. But because I believe that nothing in the history of this continent has been more shameful than the practice of enslavement (only our treatment of our unborn equals it), and because the Confederate States of America sought, though it also sought many good things, to preserve that practice, support of the CSA is not compatible with what I understand to be my duties as a faithful Christian and a faithful Southerner. Therefore, though I thank Mr. Bovenizer for his gift of a flag, I prefer not to display it. I think I'll give it to one of my students.

I hope Michael L. Ward will be pleased to know that I do indeed erect a Christmas tree each year, and that its history is for me not only an ineradicable but also a welcome part of its meaning. It's good to be reminded, especially in these times, not only of the defeat but also the transformation of pagan powers in the working out of God's purposes through Christ and His Church.

Why the Presbyterians Are in Trouble

While it is not surprising that Terry Schlossberg, who is Executive Director of Presbyterians Pro-Life, an advocacy group within our denomination, would be critical of church leaders, it is surprising that First Things editors would allow her to mobilize so many factual falsehoods in the defense of what she and they obviously regard as the "cause of orthodoxy" ("Presbyterians Hold the Line," October 1996).

At the heart of her argument lies a glaring distortion of some rather basic facts. She writes, "Since 1983, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has suffered continuous demographic, financial, theological, and spiritual decline, as its radical leaders increasingly alienated its congregations. Many members—indeed, whole congregations—responded to the national leaders' leftist stances by leaving the denomination. In the past two years alone, the church lost 77,000 members; since 1983, fully half a million of the original three million members have gone. . . ." In fact, Mrs. Schlossberg overstates the membership loss during this period by 165,000, but this is a minor error of arithmetic. Her larger falsehood is the assertion that half a million Presbyterians have left the denomination in response to the national leaders' "leftist stances."

In reality the membership loss for Presbyterians began in the 1960s and since that time there have been any number of in-depth studies undertaken to identify causes for the decline. Among the clearly identified factors is, first and foremost, the low birthrate among Presbyterians. In addition there are several other nonideological trends that correlate with membership losses, including the upward social mobility of its membership and the percentage of its members who enjoy the benefits of higher education. During the same period the Presbyterian Church has gained far more members from "conservative churches" than it has lost to them.

While these same studies do document that national church executives often hold positions to the "left" of the laity, such differences also distinguish ministers of local congregations from members of their own churches. The clergy/laity differences are more significant than the national/local divisions that Mrs. Schlossberg hangs her argument upon. Yet none of these studies has given credence to the view that such differences of opinion account for what is happening within the Presbyterian family.

At the heart of the Presbyterian predicament lies the demography of its traditional constituency. Presbyterians are generally more prosperous, more highly educated and, above all, more committed to family planning than members of more conservative churches. None of these factors would be altered were leaders of the denomination to espouse positions further to the "right." Closer to the heart of the matter is the challenge of presenting the gospel of Jesus Christ in ways that are more credible and compelling to a population that will continue to be "better educated," as well as reaching out to a whole new population of Americans who have enjoyed the benefits of a higher education but who have never been exposed to a more thoughtful presentation of a biblical, theologically grounded faith. In this task a thoughtful journal like First Things can play an important part, but not by permitting glaring falsehood to be marshaled in presumed service of the truth.

(The Rev.) Charles P. Henderson, Jr.
New Rochelle, NY

While the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) may have held the line on homosexual ordination, the tragedy is that those "unprecedented numbers" who were expected to leave if homosexuals were ordained don't seem to have the same qualms about killing babies.

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The same General Assembly Terry Schlossberg discusses refused to condemn partial-birth abortions. Other recent assemblies have refused to admit that human life begins at conception (1995), or to condemn late-term abortions (1994), or to resign membership in the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, or to change the church's health care plan. The PC (USA) is the only denomination that provides unrestricted abortion coverage for pastors, staff, and their families according to the Presbyterians Pro-Life Newsletter, Fall 1996. As it now stands, every church member who puts money in the plate supports abortion.

Perhaps the most horrifying statement on abortion is the minority report adopted in 1992. It was written by the more conservative element to oppose the majority report, which states that since we don't know when human life begins, abortion is not a sin. The minority report emphatically affirms the full humanity of the unborn child. It then anticipates Naomi Wolf by stating that we may need to kill our baby if it is grossly deformed or conceived through the father's sin of rape or incest.

Nancy Harvey
Cuba, MO

Terry Schlossberg replies:

Nancy Harvey's observations point out how far we have to go and illustrate my point that in times of transition there may seem to be more evidence of decline than of renewal. However, change gripped even the authors of the minority report she refers to—none of them today holds to the exceptions for abortion they wrote into their report in 1992.

Charles P. Henderson, Jr., on the other hand, offers familiar rationalization for decline of the Presbyterian Church by citing reasons that seem to argue that neither theology nor morality matter to us. In fact, the "in-depth" studies which he neglects to cite are characterized by disputes over the real reasons for decline. The work of Benton Johnson, Dean R. Hoge, and Donald A. Luidens ("Mainline Churches: The Real Reason for Decline," FT, March 1993) challenged other attempts to explain the reasons for the decline, which in the 1960s utterly reversed what had been growth among the mainline denominations that equaled or exceeded that of the United States as a whole up to that time. Mr. Henderson tries to attribute our decline to such positive reasons as education, prosperity, and low birthrates. But Thomas C. Reeves in *The Empty Church: The Suicide of Liberal Christianity* (Free Press, 1996), along with Johnson et al., notes that the primary reason for decline is not low birthrates but rather teenage dropouts, the children of members who reach the age of decision and leave: "Fully 48 percent of Presbyterian youth drop out of church-going altogether." Further, one expects growth to be associated not merely with reproduction within the membership but in a significant way with evangelism and mission work. But overseas mission giving is in decline; George Gallup found in 1989 that evangelism is "virtually ignored by the mainline churches."

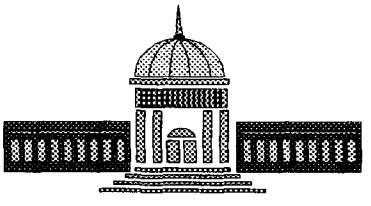
We may be upwardly mobile and well educated, as Mr. Henderson says, but per member giving to churches associated with the National Council of Churches today is lower than in the depths of the Great Depression.

Other chroniclers note the loss of distinctives that give people no reason to choose church over the Rotary Club. Reeves quotes former PC (USA) Stated Clerk James Andrews commenting on the loss of distinctives in the church: "Churches without any self-understanding lose members." Reeves' well-documented chronicle supports his conclusion that the mainline churches' loss of members and influence is linked to the increasingly empty theology and politics of its leaders, which was my thesis.

In 1993 one of our Presbyterian pastors, A. Russell Stevenson, listed churches in our denomination that qualify as "mega-churches" (*Presbyterian Layman*, September/October 1993). His group of thirty-nine churches all have Sunday morning attendance in excess of 1,000 and total income of at least $600 per member. "The remarkable common factor" among them, noted Stevenson, "is that they are all evangelical churches!" Contrary to Mr. Henderson's theory, decline is not the natural state of the Church. Those that uphold biblical standards for living our lives, offer a clear exposition of orthodox Christian faith, and communicate that faith clearly in the midst of the moral confusion of our culture are not in decline. Those of us working for renewal hope for a reclaimed vitality in the proclamation of the Gospel that will come to characterize the whole of Christ's Church once again.

Form and Substance

I read Professor A. J. Conyers' article "Protestant Principle, Catholic Substance" (November 1996) and wanted to cheer. I too, have over the years developed an increasing awareness that "something is seriously missing" in most of our Protestant churches.



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That missing something is, as Prof. Conyers says, catholic substance.

However, I fear that sometimes we may confuse catholic substance with catholic form. Many Protestants (especially Lutherans and Anglicans) are rightly concerned with forms of worship. The often quoted phrase "lex orandi lex credendi" is recited in support of the theological importance of forms of worship. And although I agree that the basic form of the mass is a confession of faith, it is no guarantee of that confession. It is probably stating the obvious to say that many conservative evangelical or fundamentalist churches that have little concern with catholic form may preserve catholic substance more faithfully than their liturgically correct brothers and sisters. I say all of this not to suggest that liturgical forms are adiaphora, because what we do in worship *is* a confession of faith. But perhaps one reason why conservative churches are growing is because the faithful sense that these churches are conserving something of the catholic substance. This is true particularly of the catholic moral consensus regarding abortion and homosexuality, but it is also true in matters of doctrine. For most oldline/sideline Protestant churches there is only confusion about these issues.

What, it seems to me, is needed in our oldline/sideline Protestant congregations is a return both to a recognizably catholic form of worship and also to a recognizable confession of the catholic substance of faith and moral teaching. Someone may ask why I would not simply become a Roman Catholic if it is catholic form and substance I desire. This is a question that many of us have wrestled with, and the answer for me is that the Protestant Principle (grace alone, faith alone, Christ alone, Scripture alone) is still a needed corrective in today's Roman Catholic Church. If the Protestant Principle is still a needed corrective, then a renewed Protestant church is the needed ecumenical partner in dialogues with Rome.

(The Rev.) Eric M. Riesen
Zion Lutheran Church
Pittsburgh, PA

Anglican Bashing

While I find your journal most illuminating—indeed, a bracing breath of fresh air in these times—I write to take issue with a disquieting theme that crops up from time to time. I refer to your disparagement of the Anglican Communion. Every issue seems to take a potshot at Anglicans. Not that many of these cracks are not well deserved. As a traditionalist Anglo-Catholic Episcopalian, I am continually outraged by the actions of the corrupt and decadent leaders of the Episcopal Church, who are in many cases no longer recognizable as Christians, and thus welcome the kind of reasoned Christian critique I find in First Things. I speak rather of the occasional cracks at Anglican legitimacy. . . .

First Things seems to me to be preaching a traditionalist ecumenism, where those who adhere to the historic tenets of "Mere Christianity" unite to defend them against an increasingly hostile modern world and increasingly apostate church hierarchies, regardless of their Reformation-era differences. It seems to me that the Anglican tradition of a Church both Catholic and Reformed, with a broad variety of usages within, and its solid historical claims to Apostolic legitimacy, is peculiarly well suited to helping to bridge the divisions between traditionalist Christians. Granted that the current Episcopalian leadership in the U.S. is appalling, but it has this in common with the other "mainline" churches, and traditionalists exist who still fight the good fight. I would appreciate more recognition of this. . . .

Christopher Holleman
Arlington, VA

Agent of Influence

Richard John Neuhaus, in his November 1996 While We're At It, remarks on a recent *Mother Jones* exposé of the Institute on Religion and Democracy. Specifically, that magazine was disturbed that a "former" CIA agent, at IRD's behest, analyzed the works of the Rev. Dr. J. Philip Wogaman, the pastor to Bill and Hillary Clinton.

I am that former CIA "agent." And I confess to having read (or at least skimmed) about thirty years worth of books and articles by Dr. Wogaman in the course of several clandestine visits to the library of Wesley Seminary, Dr. Wogaman's old haunt. *Mother Jones* blamed IRD's subsequent report for having persuaded Bob and Elizabeth Dole to leave Dr. Wogaman's congregation. But I believe that Dr. Wogaman himself deserves all the credit.

Dr. Wogaman's "dry" odes to socialism seemed to me more quaint than disturbing. Of more interest were his views on the Bible (whose veracity he believes to be on par with the *Washington Post*), on the Person of Jesus (whose literal claims of a Virgin Birth have "injured" many people), on abortion (which he defends even in the partial-birth variety), and homosexuality (which he sees as a

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divine gift to especially blessed persons).

My disagreements with Dr. Wogaman on these issues derive from training I received not at the CIA but from the Sunday Schools of the denomination (United Methodist) to which both Dr. Wogaman and I belong. . . .

Mark Tooley
United Methodist Director, IRD
Washington, D.C.

Unfair Criticism

I am writing to express my strong disappointment with your review of the Rutherford Institute's *Handbook on Religious Liberty Around the World* (Briefly Noted, November 1996). For you to label the *Handbook*, and by implication the Rutherford Institute, as having an "anti-Catholic bias" demonstrates a partial reading of the *Handbook* and a total disregard for our record, offends our institution, and worse yet, tarnishes truth itself. As you mention in your review, the Rutherford Institute has in fact a "distinguished record" in defense of religious liberty. It has provided legal assistance not only to Protestant and Catholic Christians, but also to Jews, Hindus, and members of other religions. We have always acted based on principle—liberty for all, not self or denominational interest.

Countless Catholics in the United States, Latin America, Europe, and other regions of the world have been assisted by the Rutherford Institute. For instance, in Latin America we have worked closely with Dr. Luis Ossio Sanjinez, former Vice President of Bolivia and currently President of the Pontifical Council for the Family. We have also assisted priests and other Roman Catholics on issues related to human life and family autonomy. . . .

Your criticism of the *Handbook* refers to the "lack of uniform analysis" and highlights the fact that "militantly atheistic regimes" such as North Korea and Vietnam "have almost no mention." The Introduction to the *Handbook* clearly states that it is "divided into seven major regions," each one of those containing a "representative sample of countries which illustrate the full spectrum of religious liberty" issues, from "relatively free countries to oppressive ones." Our intention, thus, was to highlight not only the injustice that people and governments do, but also to provide some positive examples of nations that protect religious freedom. . . .

Out of forty-three country reports covered by the *Handbook*, only nine concern Latin American countries. Your review intentionally focused on minor violations of religious liberty detailed in the *Handbook*, but failed to mention the serious ones. The latter include the persecution (including rape and murder) of Chamula Indians (Presbyterians) in Mexico at the hands of self-described Catholics who count on the indifference of the government (p. 243); the recent memorandum issued by the Commander of the Bolivian Army which prohibits all non-Catholic religious activity in the Army (p. 216); and the arrest in May 1992 of Bishop Edir Macedo, a Protestant leader, on charges of "charlatanism, illegal exercise of medicine [because of his miraculous healings], and fraud." Bishop Macedo was released only after a massive demonstration took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in defense of religious liberty for all (p. 221).

These and all other cases of religious discrimination and persecution must be confronted openly and vigorously, and that is what the *Handbook* does. . . .

Pedro C. Moreno
International Coordinator
The Rutherford Institute
Charlottesville, VA

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This Time

Bad News

James Nuechterlein

In Bob Dole's remarkably inept campaign for the presidency, he could nonetheless count on one surefire applause line to rouse even the most dispirited audience: an attack on "the liberal media." (He made a particular target of the *New York Times*.) Dole obviously enjoyed sticking it to the press, but there is no reason to doubt his sincerity in raising the issue. All politicians, whatever their differences, have one thing in common. They are all convinced that the press is irresponsible and that it is out to do them in. And, on both counts, they are right.

The political press in America—both print and broadcast—does its job, on the whole, quite badly, and in being so much less good than it ought to be it does a continuing disservice to the American people. The generally poisonous air of our politics owes much to the press and its characteristic way of reporting what goes on in our public life.

Part of the problem is ideological. The classic study in the 1980s by Robert and Linda Lichter and Stanley Rothman of the media elite (major reporters and executives at ABC, CBS, and NBC news, *Time* and *Newsweek*, and the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*) confirmed what everyone who pays attention to such things had already known: the men and women who give us the news are, as a group, politically more liberal, morally more permissive, and religiously more indifferent than the general public. Various studies since have confirmed the Lichter/Rothman findings. All of which means that the average citizen receives a version of political reality created by people whose views of the world are considerably at odds with his own.

How much difference this makes is a matter for debate. Defenders of the press argue that reporters' liberal instincts do not necessarily translate into liberal bias in handling of the news. It is true enough that most reporters want to be fair and do make more-or-less conscientious efforts not to allow their own preferences to intrude into their professional activities. We have fortunately got beyond the media mood of the sixties, when for a time the pernicious idea spread that, perfect objectivity being impossible, reporters should discard timid ideals of balance and impartiality and engage openly in "advocacy journalism." Few reputable journalists ever succumbed to that heresy, and virtually none would advance it today (at least not in public).

Yet there was an element of truth in the advocacy heresy (as there is in most heresies), and it bears on the question of the relationship between what reporters privately believe and how they do their jobs. Perfect objectivity, whether in journalism or any other form of intellectual activity, *is* beyond attainment, and even the most scrupulous reporter will find it impossible to keep his reporting entirely untainted by ideology.

The world of reality never comes through to us unmediated. Facts acquire meaning only as they are selected, arranged, and interpreted. That process of taking on meaning is shaped for each of us by the distinctive worldviews we (explicitly or implicitly) live by, and so it follows necessarily that, to some degree, liberal reporters will produce liberal news. Whether, for example, one views committed pro-lifers as heroes or fanatics will depend on prior judgments regarding abortion. (This reality should in no way weaken journalists' attachment to the ideal of objectivity. We all know—or ought to know—that moral perfection is beyond our reach, yet most of us do not derive from that knowledge the conclusion that it is pointless to aspire to virtue.)

Liberals inclined to minimize the significance of a leftward inclination among the media elite might test themselves on the point by asking how they would react if the situation were reversed—if, in fact, the world taken for granted by the nation's leading reporters and news executives tilted to the right rather than the left. Having done so, they might be less likely than they now are to dismiss conservative fears on the subject as paranoid imaginings or instances of a know-nothing inclination to "blame the messenger" for bad news—as if journalistic "bad news" were not, at least in part, an artifact constructed of the subjective interpretations of the message-bearer.

All that said, I suspect that ideology is not the primary problem in the less-than-adequate job that the press does in transmitting the news. America is plagued less by advocacy journalism than by adversary journalism. The press has somehow concluded that its proper stance over against government and politics is one of opposition. Our political life is made to look worse than it is not so much because journalists oppose any one tendency in politics as because they have come to oppose the political class in general. We are the victims of a chronically—often mindlessly—antiestablishment press. It hounds Democrats in the White House almost as mercilessly as it does Republicans. Its notion of fairness is to act as equal-opportunity fishwife.

This habit of mind has deep roots in American history. The populist tradition, with its instinctive mistrust of government and conventional politics, goes all the way back to the nation's origins. Many, if not most, Americans have found it natural to assume

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that they are governed by knaves and fools, and so the press, in harping on that theme, merely reinforces prejudices that are already second-nature to its audience.

It was the Watergate scandal that hardened an habitual suspicion into an enduring article of belief. In Richard Nixon, it turned out that we had a President who, while certainly no fool, most assuredly was a knave. His successors are still paying for Nixon's sins. The press played a role—though a less significant one than it likes to imagine—in ferreting out the Watergate crimes, and it has never recovered from those moments of glory. Significant elements within the media continue to act as if they constituted a permanent and not-so-loyal opposition to the government of the day.

This most commonly takes the form of what one might call a naive cynicism toward the behavior of those in power. (The press has overlearned Lord Acton's maxim. Power may corrupt, but the exercise of power is not in itself a corruption.) So it is that actions or comments by major political figures are invariably accompanied (especially on the network news) by analyses that take the form of exposing the *real* reasons—always self-serving in nature and always carefully concealed—behind the words or deeds themselves. The audience can hardly miss the meaning: no politician ever quite means what he says or ever does anything except for reasons of self-aggrandizement. Politicians, to be sure, often do succumb to the temptations of power and we need to keep them on a short leash. But if they are no better than the rest of us, it is only a sentimental populism which insists that they are immeasurably worse.

No one disputes that the press exercises a necessary and often valuable watchdog function. But those in the media frequently act as if we had no judicial system or no institutionalized political opposition. The primary function of the press is to report and inform, and if it gives opposition politicians the coverage they deserve, we can assume that the job of keeping a careful watch on those in power will not go unattended.

There is no precise way to measure the damage that the prevailing negativism of the press does to political comity in America, but it must be considerable. The governing of a democratic society is a difficult enterprise, grounded in ambiguity and uncertainty, inherently controversial. Given a citizenry inclined to a lazy cynicism, the American press could advance the public interest by giving some sense of the relentless and unappeasable pressures under which democratic leaders operate. Instead it feeds a populist self-righteousness and antipolitics animus that reflect our political culture's least attractive qualities.

It is not the role of the press to provide us good news, but neither is it to compound our bad news. FT

The Last Man

Restrained no more, the last rebelling man,
Alone as he had always wished to be,
Sole monarch of himself, with not a clan,
Nor tribe, nor state, nor nation left that he,
Protesting, must obey, has sat him down
Upon the last green acreage of sod
And woven of the pliant grass a crown
To show the rotted dead that he is God.

To show the dead his is the only face;
His thought the only consciousness; his eye
The only judge of substance or of space;
His skull the only congruence with sky.
And singing loud his praise he spends his breath.
Extinguishing the universe in death.

Charles Gordon Rex

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Opinion

Catholics and the 1996 Election

James T. McHugh

The endless political discussion of the 1996 elections seems at last to be over, and one gets the impression that Americans are glad it's over. But the twists and turns of the Roman Catholic vote in the election deserve some further analysis, for they open a window on both what's happening in the Church and what's happening in the country. Though the Republicans maintained a majority in Congress, Catholic voting patterns varied from race to race and are therefore difficult to interpret. The pattern was more clear in voting for President. With voter turnout at its lowest since 1924, 53 percent of Catholic voters went for Bill Clinton, 37 percent for Bob Dole, and 9 percent for Ross Perot. Clinton's Catholic total was up from 44 percent in 1992, but Dole's was up as well—though not nearly as much—from Bush's 35 percent. Both gains came at the expense of Perot, who had received 20 percent in 1992.

The President's success in increasing his share of the Catholic vote in 1996 has been attributed to a number of factors: effective use of Catholic institutions as backdrops for photo-ops on the campaign trail, friendship with certain Catholic leaders, and an emphasis on some social issues calculated to appeal to Catholics. In addition, the strong and costly effort of organized labor may have helped recapture working-class Catholics who had been in the Perot column in 1992. Dole, on the other hand, not only seemed to lack a strategy for appealing to Catholics, but seemed uncomfortable with the opportunities that came his way.

In light of the teaching of the Second Vatican Council and repeated statements of the United States Catholic Conference, Catholics ought to be identifiable in the electorate by voting patterns based on moral concerns, not on party membership or party loyalty. They should support candidates who display moral integrity and whose positions are consistent with Catholic moral concerns. They should withhold their support from those who hold positions that violate the Church's moral teaching. But in the 1996 elections, it is clear that many Catholics arrived at their electoral choices on other grounds. The question is, what actually happened and why?

In the fall of 1995, the American bishops issued a statement—"Political Responsibility: Proclaiming the Gospel of Life, Protecting the Least Among Us, and Preserving the Common Good"—intended to speak about moral and human issues of special concern to Catholics. Declaring that "elections are a time for debate and decisions on the leaders, policies, and values that will guide our nation," the statement reminded voters that they needed "to register and vote; to understand issues and assess candidates' positions and qualifications; and to join with others in advocating for the common good." Exhorting Catholics "to share our values, raise our voices, and use our votes to shape a society more respectful of human life, human dignity, and human rights," it noted that Pope John Paul II's 1995 visit to the United Nations "was a powerful call to use our freedom in the service of truth, to protect human life and human dignity, and to stand up for unborn children, poor families, and immigrants." It then listed twenty specific issues for consideration from abortion to welfare reform. More than 500,000 copies were circulated; it was often quoted or referred to in articles in Catholic journals about the election and in September a special update was sent to all the bishops urging that they continue their efforts to inform people on the moral dimensions of campaign issues. When we look at the election results, we must admit that our great effort was a failure. Many of those elected, especially President Clinton, took positions directly opposed to Church positions on abortion, aid to parents for educational choice, welfare, immigration, the economy, and international affairs. And Catholics voted for such candidates without any apparent scruple or concern.

At the November meeting of the bishops, there was no discussion of the election results. Some bishops privately expressed surprise and frustration at the support Clinton received, especially after his veto of the partial-birth abortion ban. They were also frustrated by the election of candidates who openly reject—if not ridicule—the positions of the bishops.

Nonetheless, the bishops' statements on political responsibility can be useful educational tools. Written by staff at the Bishops Conference—and, unlike other statements of special concern, not brought to the full body of bishops for discussion and amendment—the political statements have been issued every presidential election year since 1976. Over the years the statements have become too long and general, and give the impression that all the issues they discuss are of equal significance. In 2000, a new process should be employed so that all bishops are consulted on the content, structure, and intent of the statement. The final version should be reviewed and agreed on by the entire conference of bishops. It should be shorter, take a tone of moral forcefulness, and give Catholics more pointed advice on how to measure

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candidates in light of their positions. The statement should also explain clearly why Catholics should refuse to vote for those who fail in personal integrity or who hold positions contrary to the moral teaching set forth in the document. As a model, they might take Sydney Callahan's effective essay in *Commonweal* explaining that, although a lifelong Democrat, she would vote for Dole as her only effective protest against Clinton's veto of the partial-birth abortion ban.

The chosen issues should be given a careful ordering, based on Catholic moral teaching and relevance to the choosing of candidates. Issues such as abortion, euthanasia, and racism should be singled out because of their moral importance. The 1995 statement quotes liberally from Pope John Paul II's encyclical *The Gospel of Life*, but it does not reflect the doctrinal priority given by the encyclical to moral teaching on abortion, euthanasia, and the taking of innocent human life. In 1989, addressing abortion as a moral and political issue, the bishops themselves stated that "no Catholic can responsibly take a pro-choice stand when the 'choice' in question involves the taking of innocent human life." In explaining the consistent ethic of life, the late Cardinal Joseph Bernardin emphasized that Catholics can disqualify those who support or promote abortion: "I don't see how you can subscribe to the consistent ethic and then vote for someone who feels that abortion is a 'basic right' of the individual." The 1995 political responsibility statement urged that "religious voices in public life must persuade, not just proclaim, and the test of our witness is not only how strongly we believe, but how effectively we persuade and translate our beliefs into action." Future statements must note the moral difference of the issues addressed. Some positions are fundamental and nonnegotiable. On other issues the bishops may have a preference for one public policy approach over another, but it is not a clear-cut case of one preference being good and the other morally unacceptable. Disagreement in these instances between the bishops' position and a candidate's need not disqualify the candidate. Further, government financial aid for Catholic education, while not a clear issue of moral evil, is a valid priority for Catholics and, whether achieved by vouchers or tax credits, should be given greater emphasis as a matter of fairness and justice.

How to formulate specific questions in a timely manner remains a problem for statements on political responsibility formulated a year before the elections. The section on international affairs in the 1996 statement, for example, was quite general and composed too early to take account of later statements made by a number of bishops criticizing U.S. policies that undermine or refuse support for Catholic Relief Services. Similarly, though the popes have repeatedly supported the United Nations, the bishops never addressed the issues of the U.S. failure to pay its dues or the U.S. campaign against former Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

Future statements would also benefit from a careful examination of the limits on political activity by Church agencies set by the Internal Revenue Service. The Federal Code says that tax-exempt nonprofit agencies are not to be involved in lobbying or political campaigns to a substantial degree. But President Clinton campaigned in non-Catholic churches, Protestant leaders openly endorsed candidates, and Planned Parenthood—in full-page, clearly political ads in national newspapers opposing Republicans who rejected abortion—asked for tax exempt donations to Planned Parenthood. Legal scholars have different opinions as to the precise meaning of the IRS regulations and their extension in specific rulings. But it seems to me that the bishops have been given an excessively cautious interpretation of what Catholic entities may do. As the election drew near, written or spoken references critical of President Clinton's support for partial-birth abortion were increasingly disallowed on the grounds that such criticism might give the *perception* of involvement in prohibited political activity. The *perception* theory does not appear to be an IRS ruling, however, but a USCC interpretation. And the same caution did not seem to apply to all other issues or candidates, as evidenced in newspaper accounts of other USCC staff

From letters I've received and discussions I've had, I find it increasingly clear that if my fellow bishops and I want to implement our teaching on political responsibility, we must find a way to inform Catholics of the positions of candidates on critical moral issues and to make clear that some positions are so much at variance with Catholic teaching that candidates holding them are disqualified from Catholic support. This is essential if bishops expect to have an impact on the adoption of laws and social policies that support and protect the dignity and rights of the human person and the common good. Those elected to public office at every level are aware of the positions of the bishops and their agencies, but they seem unconvinced of their seriousness and determination. Some legislators dismiss life issues on the ground that good Catholics can agree to disagree on such matters, especially if they support the Church on other social issues. Other legislators openly reject the positions of the bishops, claiming that influential Catholics such as Father Robert Drinan provide them an alternate position. Fr. Drinan's tactics have seriously undermined the efforts of the bishops and those who represent them.

It is time we take seriously the role assigned to the bishop in terms of teaching and public leadership. The encyclical *The Splendor of Truth* reminds us that "the fundamental rules of social life entail specific demands to which both public authorities and citizens are required to pay heed." Bishops are

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urged to be personally vigilant that the sound doctrine of Catholic morality is taught and applied in the circumstances of public life as well as in the privacy of conscience. When a legislator, an advocacy group, or a so-called "Catholic spokesperson" attempts to mislead people, the bishops and their representatives must denounce such efforts and declare that those who perpetrate them are not in union with the bishops, their agencies, or, in some cases, with the Catholic Church.

Clearly, we have a long way to go in defining our role in public and political affairs. Obvious questions remain about how exactly to translate witness into action. The bishops tried on partial-birth abortion, staging an unprecedented press conference and prayer service with all the American cardinals on the steps of the Capitol urging a Senate override of President Clinton's veto. Reports on the bishops' efforts were muted from September on, however, and were virtually lost as election day drew near. President Clinton not only vetoed the original bill, but tried to justify his veto by displaying at his highly orchestrated press conference women he claimed had had partial-birth abortions—and pointedly identifying two of the women as Catholics. When the Bishops Conference sent a questionnaire to the presidential candidates, asking their position on a range of topics, the President's staff declared that Clinton had signed as Governor of Arkansas a law banning third-trimester abortions, with an exception for life and health, and would sign a bill against partial-birth abortions if it contained a health exception. This response was circulated for publication in diocesan papers, but there was nothing to indicate that it was a misleading answer: The health exception would have radically reversed the intent of the bill, and Clinton was widely praised by pro-abortionists for supporting partial-birth abortion with his veto. Clinton's popularity seemed to overshadow his moral failure, and the efforts of the bishops on partial-birth abortion were further frustrated.

Despite these questions, however, there is much that can be done. For too long the Catholic bishops have been passive, withdrawn, or indirect in trying to give leadership. The 1996 elections should serve as a wake-up call for review and appraisal and a warning that proclamation will not effectively be translated into witness and leadership unless our message is clear, morally compelling, and unyielding.

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In on the Kill

Alan Jacobs

On public television and the educational cable channels, the current rage seems to be for documentaries showing animals eating other animals. And to judge by the number of ads I see inviting people to order videotapes, the regularly scheduled predation doesn't offer enough carnage for the viewing audience.

But I have found that whenever I point out this rage for watching predators devour their prey, nearly everyone defends the shows, and their arguments almost always use the same terms: the old nature documentaries sanitized and prettified the animal world, disguising from us the harsh truth of "nature red in tooth and claw." These newer documentaries merely present to us The Way Things Are—and thus are beyond reproach.

Now it is true that predation is part of The Way Things Are, but sleeping is even more a part of The Way Things Are: for every hour a lioness spends hunting she spends a dozen sleeping, yet our television documentaries picture few somnolent cats. And the hard, slow work that hunting chiefly amounts to is given insignificant representation in comparison to the moment at which the claws catch an antelope and the teeth tear its neck. Moreover, animals who eat also defecate, yet I cannot remember seeing our intrepid documentarians exploring *that* subject with telephoto lenses and extreme slow motion.

We cannot plausibly claim that any nature documentary merely presents to us an unedited version of The Way Things Are. Filmmakers give us pictures of predation because they, and we, are *interested* in predation. We would rather watch a female praying mantis eat the head of her mate in the midst of copulation (to cite a scene replayed endlessly in nature shows) than watch her eat a leaf. The Discovery Channel is just as market-driven as the local news with an "if it bleeds it leads" policy—the market is just a little more specialized—and its programming executives show animals tearing apart the bodies of other animals because Nielsen ratings and focus groups indicate the financial wisdom of doing so. What does it say about us that we like to watch such things?

Such shows are, I believe, the modern equivalent of bear-baiting, or the educated middle-class counterpart to cock-fighting, only with several insulating layers between modern viewers and the violence they endorse:

(1) We're just watching what others have filmed;
(2) They're just filming what the animals are doing;
(3) The animals are just following their instincts.

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This kind of argument is made possible by what Stanley Milgram called "the fragmentation of the total human act." Milgram's famous experiments on obedience revealed that people can justify participating in the most dreadful deeds if an authority commands their involvement and if they can understand themselves as caught in a chain of events over which they have no control. It seems to me that the modern display of nature's pornography is analogous: since we are neither the ones who kill nor the ones who film the killing, we have no moral stake in the events we watch. But by watching such programs we endorse what happens in them and bear a certain responsibility for them. We have not simply failed to turn off the TV; our sin is not merely one of omission. By watching we *will* the continuation of such shows and hence, inevitably, the acts represented in them.

Dante understood this peculiarity of human character perfectly well. In the eighth circle of Hell, he and his guide Virgil meet the Falsifiers—among them a thirteenth-century counterfeiter named Master Adam and the infamous Greek Sinon, who tricked the Trojans into allowing the fatal wooden horse into their city. Dante watches as Master Adam and Sinon fall into a bitter exchange of insults and vituperation. For thirty lines of verse they snarl at one another. Then Virgil, the personification of human Reason, turns to Dante and says, "Now keep on looking a little longer and I quarrel with you." Why is he troubled? Because, as he later explains, "the wish to hear such baseness is degrading." There are certain events and actions, Virgil seems to say, toward which the only proper response is to avert one's eyes. This need not be a denial of reality; in fact, it is an acceptance that reality is often terrible. Predation is of course unlike the bitter recriminations of Sinon and Master Adam in that there is no sin in it. But I cannot think of it as a good thing that some creatures live only by the dying of other creatures; and still less can I think a fascination with such killing good.

Here I must confess my sympathy for the old Christian view that predation is a consequence of the Fall. There is of course nothing that most people would call "evidence" for this view—though there could be an interesting conversation about what the evidence for it might be—but I am powerfully drawn to the notion nonetheless.

The Puritans seem to have been distinctive in their time for stressing the link between predation and the Fall. The historian Macaulay famously sneered that the Puritans banned bear-baiting not because it gave pain to the bear but because it gave pleasure to the spectators. The truth is that the Puritans cared about both bears and spectators, as is clearly shown in Keith Thomas' great book *Man and the Natural World.* Thomas reports that the seventeenth-century English writer Philip Stubbes asked in his *Anatomy of Abuses,* "What Christian heart can take pleasure to see one poor beast rend, tear, and kill another?" Bear-baiting is "a filthy, stinking, and loathsome game" because it willfully seeks and takes pleasure in the destruction of animals who "are good creatures in their nature and kind"—even though bears in particular "be bloody beasts to mankind and seek his destruction"—and who are "made to set forth the glory and magnificence of the great God, and therefore for his sake [are] not to be abused."

But if mere respect for Creation enjoins our charity to animals, the repercussions of the Fall of Adam and Eve for the natural order—the world that, as St. Paul says to the Roman church, "has been groaning in travail" because human sinfulness has placed not just us but also it in "bondage to decay"—redoubles our responsibility. This is one of the reasons the viewing of cruelty is nearly as bad as the perpetration of it. Thomas records the eloquently admonitory words of one of Stubbes' contemporaries, a gentleman named John Spencer whose brother had a fascination for cock-fighting: "You make that a cause of your jollity and merriment which should be a cause of your grief and godly sorrow, for you take delight in the enmity and cruelty of the creatures, which was laid upon them for the sin of man."

Certain forms of untrained animal behavior make me question the they're-just-following-their-instincts argument and give renewed consideration to Spencer's "archaic" view of a morally charged Nature. Researchers have recently discovered that some male gorillas murder infant gorillas so as to free their mothers from child-care and for sexual activity. A recent book by the British biologist Lyall Watson, *Dark Nature: A Natural History of Evil,* relates tale after tale of just this sort, most worse than the example I just gave. Reading Watson's gruesome account—and considering his utter inability to think of anything to do about the scene of horrors he describes—I am reminded of the great question of Voltaire's Candide. After hearing his tutor Pangloss recount in gory detail a series of disastrous and bloody experiences, Candide asks, "What a strange genealogy, Pangloss. Isn't the Devil at the root of it?"

There may at times be reasons for us to force ourselves to look at the killing and eating of animals by other animals (just as there may be, and indeed are, good reasons for forcing ourselves to watch films of the Nazi concentration camps). But if we do not have to force ourselves, if we look upon such scenes with pleasure and fascination, something is terribly wrong. Those who can look without flinching upon animals having the flesh of their bellies eaten while they are still alive are morally numb; those who seek out such scenes for their viewing enjoyment are depraved.

It has occurred to me at several points in the writing of this essay that I should become a vegetarian before having it published. But I am not a vegetarian. I am like the Boy of the Far North, depicted in

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Galway Kinnell's great poem "To Christ Our Lord," who ventures out into the snow, shoots a goose, and brings it home to be cooked for Christmas dinner. As a long-winded thanksgiving is said by an adult at the head of the table, the boy looks at what he has killed and meditates that in a terrible sense it is a creature's death for which thanks are being given. "Is it fitting to eat this creature killed on the wing?" But then it begins to dawn on the boy that the feast of Christmas itself commemorates the beginning of an earthly life whose violent ending is for all Christians the cause of measureless thanksgiving.

> He asked again,
> For whom had Love stirred?
> Then the Swan spread its wings,
> Cross of the cold North, the pattern
> And the mirror of the acts of earth.

Cygnus the Swan, or the Northern Cross. A bird, a cross; two deaths converge, represented by a single constellation.

Kinnell says of the boy, "He ate as he had killed, with wonder." He was right to feel such wonder. But I think that wonder is not enough. As we contemplate not just the Death that redeems but also all those other deaths—the young zebra raked by the lioness's claws, the field mouse locked in the owl's talons, and, yes, the cow driven through the metal chute into the slaughterhouse—which, however necessary to the natural economy, redeem nothing, we need more than wonder. We need pity and fear: pity for the animals, and fear for ourselves, lest before the Judgment Seat we stand accused. If we must watch them die, let us do so in that pitying and fearful spirit, not in the spirit of the documentarian, with slow motion replays and telephoto lenses and the expectant leaning forward towards the glowing screen.

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The Fragmented Faith of American Jews

Clifford E. Librach

In August 1966, the journal *Commentary* published "The State of Jewish Belief," a symposium now considered one of the great spiritual and intellectual snapshots of an American religious community. After an introduction by Milton Himmelfarb, thirty-eight leading Jewish thinkers addressed their own and contemporary religious thought with great erudition, intellectual sophistication, and philosophical rigor.

In August 1996, thirty years later, *Commentary* returned to the well with a new symposium—"What Do American Jews Believe?"—including representatives of the three major Jewish branches: Orthodoxy, Conservatism, and Reform, as well as the much-smaller Reconstructionist movement. It is not an entirely representative group. To answer questions about belief in God, the status of Torah as divine revelation, the chosenness of the Jewish people, and the anticipation of a Messiah, *Commentary* had to call upon thinkers all of whom, even the most liberal, take the *religiousness* of their religion seriously. Missing from the group, as a result, are those who regard Jewish identity primarily as leftist politics (e.g., Arthur Waskow and Michael Lerner) or trans-denominational neo-mysticism (e.g., Zalman Schachter-Shalomi).

The biased sample here may not be a bad thing, however, since religion is precisely the aspect of the American Jewish community that is largely obscure to the public at large, including most Jews. The general perception of modern Jews—confirmed, lamentably, by almost all statistical and anecdotal evidence—is of an adamantly secular people. Most Jews do not belong to a synagogue or give their children formal training in their own religion. Those who are synagogue members are not usually active, often attending worship services only on the High Holy Days and otherwise using the synagogue as a child-centered bar/bat mitzvah recital mill, like a dance studio or karate school.

A cynic might declare that the credo of American Jews at the end of the twentieth century can be reduced to two propositions: "Jesus Christ is not the Messiah," and "Because of the Holocaust, the entire world does now and will always owe the Jewish people an ethnic hypersensitivity." (One of the symposium contributors, David Klinghoffer, offers a caustic challenge to such Jewish negativism: "If we have no mission from God, maybe we should all marry Episcopalians, disappear with dignity, and thus quit inflicting ourselves on our Christian neighbors—with our liberalism, our chauvinsim, our self-pity.")

So, while not broadly representative of the Jewish community at large, the concerns and the participants in *Commentary*'s latest symposium do at least attempt to provide a window into the authentic *religious* dimension of American Judaism. But if the conception of the symposium is worthy, the result is in some ways disappointing. The discussions seem somehow leaner and less significant than the ones presented thirty years ago. This thinness may be

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attributed, in part, to the editors having severely limited the length of the essays this time around. Still, there is a sense in which theological depth has been replaced by ideological acrimony and quarrelsomeness.

There are interesting differences between the two efforts. In 1966 the respondents were primarily pulpit rabbis, whereas in 1996 the field is dominated by academics; in 1966 all thirty-eight respondents were men, while in 1996 seven women are included. But the most striking difference between the earlier and later symposiums lies in the reversal of ideological momentum between liberal and traditional Judaism. In 1966, the plurality of respondents were Reform rabbis, who, for the most part, wrote with utter self-confidence, barely granting a nod to the struggles of Orthodox Judaism. In 1996, by contrast, the tilt is strongly toward Orthodoxy and the traditional wing of the Conservative movement. That traditionalism, moreover, has become confident and even pugnacious in a way no one could have anticipated in 1966. As David Singer observes, thirty years ago "the Orthodox participants were comfortable in their modernity, but at pains to justify their Orthodoxy. In 1996, for me at least, the situation is exactly the reverse: my Orthodoxy is rock solid, but I am hard-pressed to justify any accommodation with modernity."

Though it still cannot claim more than 10 percent of Jews in the United States, Orthodoxy has, over the last two generations, made significant numerical gains, and its gains in ideological confidence have far exceeded its numerical growth. The 1966 presentations by Orthodox rabbis were notable for the intellectual delicacy with which they defensively justified the strict regimen of Orthodox Judaism in the midst of a dynamic and vibrant American culture. Such thinkers as Eliezer Berkovitz, Marvin Fox, Immanuel Jakobovitz, Emanuel Rackman, Norman Lamm, and Aharon Lichtenstein were obviously quite at home in the world of intellectual modernity but sounded almost quaintly pious in their quiet, passive defense of Orthodox observance.

In 1996, the Orthodox participants answer *Commentary*'s queries positively and aggressively—and proceed to note the vacuity of most everyone else; they are bold in their self-image as representing the only kind of Judaism that can survive in North America. "Reform and Conservative Judaism have failed," asserts David Gelernter, in an intellectual dismissal characteristic of much of *Commentary*'s 1996 tone. "The level of ignorance of classical Jewish sources within" liberal Judaism, observes Suzanne Last Stone, "is, if not unprecedented in Jewish society, certainly unprecedented among those who take it upon themselves to declare the response of Judaism to the complexities of contemporary life." Marshall J. Breger skewers the Reform movement in particular as made up of "those who view Jewish law as some kind of historical archive for spiritual inspiration." Rabbi Barry Freundel rejects Reform's celebration of human autonomy as seductive but ultimately demoralizing: "'Me,' if truly left alone, is nothing but a wretched, infinitesimal dot in the space continuum of the universe. . . . Is it any wonder that insecurity, meaninglessness, and a painful lack of self-worth and self-confidence are the almost-universal psychic afflictions of the day?"

By contrast, the defensive and, indeed, confused responses of the Reform participants mark an utter reversal of their 1966 confidence. Once upon a time the Reform movement tried to be a fortress of intellectual rigor and ethical integrity. But political correctness and the therapeutic culture have reduced Reform teaching to incoherence. Thus, Eric H. Yoffie, the newly installed president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, says that the "heart of Torah is mitzvah [obligation, or commandment]," but then goes on to declare: "For the great majority of American Jews, there is no leader or institution with the authority to impose commandments; the autonomous individual decides for himself or herself." One might have thought that even a liberal rabbi would allow that *God* can impose commandments, but even this isn't so clear. "As a mitzvah-inspired Liberal Jew," Yoffie insists, "the only option that I have is to decide for myself what binds me." According to this self-contradiction, then, fulfilling a commandment means doing whatever is right in one's own eyes. Similarly, Sheldon Zimmerman, the newly installed president of Hebrew Union College/Jewish Institute of Religion, prefers evocative phrasing to coherent exposition, as when he defines the Torah so broadly that it can mean anything at all. It is, at once, (a) "the story of our people's encounter with the divine and our story as well," (b) "our starting place," (c) "the prism through which we see and understand the world," (d) "the source of our story," (e) "our ongoing attempt and activity to hear God's voice in our own times as we face issues that challenge us to move to newer understandings," (f) "process," and finally, (g) "our 'lived' response to God and God's gifts."

To be sure, not all the Reform contributions to "What Do American Jews Believe?" are so uninspired. Michael A. Meyer and David Ellenson, for instance, reject postmodernity and radical autonomy as possible foundations for liberal Judaism. Marc Gellman seeks to reappropriate the notion of an afterlife and world to come, a doctrine usually ignored or rejected by modern Jews. (Neil Gillman, a Conservative theologian, develops the idea at even greater length.) Yet, sadly, it is sloppy thinking (and worse) that increasingly characterizes Reform deliberation and action. Reform leadership has begun in earnest to deconstruct Judaism's venerable liturgical metaphors in favor of feminist God-language that is

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both unpoetic and unintelligible. (Curiously, the only symposium contributor to refer to God as "She" is Saul Berman, an Orthodox rabbi.) Reform has taken unilateral action in redefining Jewish identity, not only embracing "patrilineal descent" as an option but also coming close to eliminating descent as a criterion altogether. Most shocking, perhaps, a resolution in favor of homosexual marriage as a civil right was approved by a voice vote at the Central Conference of American (Reform) Rabbis meeting last spring, after some fifteen minutes of largely one-sided debate. (As Dennis Prager observed, it was the spectacle of a large organization of rabbis considering one of the most fundamental questions of Western religious and cultural thought—with all of the profundity and seriousness that might be associated with a resolution on whether to break for lunch.)

Despite being under similar secular and political pressures, the Conservative movement has been able to preserve far more of the authentic tradition (although recent evidence suggests that the bulk of Conservative laity may be closer to Reform's intellectual laxity than to its own rabbinic leadership). David G. Dalin gives a concise articulation of the problems imbedded in the modern inheritance of a millennial tradition, citing Abraham Joshua Heschel's observation that "Judaism is based on a minimum of revelation and a maximum of interpretation." But unlike so much of Reform, in this account it is learned rabbinic interpretation, not antinomian anarchy, that determines how the mitzvot are understood and performed. Whether this way of thinking—at once traditional and modern—can ultimately provide a vital center for American Judaism remains unclear. Few contributors to the symposium hold out much hope for a center that holds. As David Weiss Halivni puts it, "The right is moving farther to the right and the left farther to the left," with little love or tolerance for other Jews.

Some observers cite a small but growing religiosity within liberal Judaism as a possible source of rapproachment. Pockets of intellectually and spiritually interested young adults now dot the landscape of Jewish America, suggesting a yearning for spiritual intensity that is specifically Jewish. Unfortunately, these efforts sometimes slip into a kind of spirituality-for-its-own-sake, becoming little more than Jewish-style tours through psychobabble and pseudo-mystical contentment. The increased use of Hebrew and the greater frequency of yarmulkes in Reform congregations are small, superficial improvements when weighed against the wholesale capitulation to a secular cosmology. As Jon D. Levenson, an Orthodox contributor, points out, increased observance is not necessarily an "indication that one is attempting to overcome the ethic of self-gratification and to replace it with the ethic of altruism that is at the heart of authentic Jewish living. The notion that personal autonomy and the quest for self-fulfillment are sacrosanct can also interfere with acceptance of important elements in Jewish morality such as the laws governing sexual behavior and the law that a fetus may be killed only in the rarest and gravest of cases."

If an inescapable theme of *Commentary*'s symposium is the resurgence of Jewish traditionalism at the expense of liberalism, traditionalists should nonetheless be only qualifiedly pleased. The irony is that traditional Judaism, particularly Orthodoxy, owes much of its current success to the past strength of liberal Judaism. The great achievement of the Reform movement was to present a version of Judaism, still grounded in God, for the great mass of educated and culturally assimilating diaspora Jews. Conservative Judaism fulfilled much of the same need while at the same time addressing the desire for ethnic solidarity and greater continuity with tradition. In short, liberal Judaism gave religious inspiration to many whose enthusiasm and intellectual curiosity would cause them later to return to religious traditionalism: Shlomo Riskin, David Novak, David Klinghoffer, Samuel Dresner, Jon Levenson, and Jacob Neusner are prominent Jewish thinkers who made such an odyssey. The current disarray of liberal Judaism, while seeming to some religious traditionalists as pure vindication, should also be an occasion for somber reflection and sorrow.

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Pride and Pessimism in the Courts

William J. Stuntz

Legally speaking, we live in strange times. Late-twentieth-century American law has a strong libertarian streak—stronger than ever in our past and getting stronger all the time—which shows up in the law's treatment of contentious moral topics like abortion, medical treatment for the terminally ill, divorce (though libertarianism is fading a bit here), and the contents of the local drugstore's magazine rack. In these spheres, the reigning legal ideology is something close to laissez-faire.

Yet late-twentieth-century America is also a society with a large and interventionist state. Our law reflects this in a host of ways. We take for granted legal regulation of every aspect of our economic lives—consider the detail with which the labor and tax laws regulate employment of babysitters (the bane of might-have-been Attorneys General). The law also aggressively regulates our social lives—consider the antidiscrimination laws that cover all contractual relationships (not just employment), bar discrimination based on a large and growing number of criteria (not just race), and often require careful accommodations to members of potentially discriminated-against groups. In other words, we are both more libertarian and more regulated than we have ever been. What gives?

I think a large part of the answer goes to a pair of attitudes about law and what it can accomplish. We are both too optimistic and too pessimistic. The mushrooming of ever more detailed and intrusive legal regulation in the last generation or so reflects the idea that smart lawyers can order the world not just reasonably well, but *optimally*. A kind of legal fine-tuning that used to be rare is now common, as though with a legal nip here and a tuck there, we can get people to do precisely what they ought to be doing. Meanwhile, the libertarian streak in our law reflects a different and much more pessimistic idea: that we are collectively incompetent to decide what is *right*—what magazines school children should and shouldn't read, what kinds of treatment pregnant women should and shouldn't give their not-yet-born offspring, what kinds of medical choices are and aren't appropriate for very sick but not-yet-dead patients, and so forth.

This combination of extreme optimism about the law's ability to shape behavior and extreme pessimism about the law's ability to draw fairly basic moral lines is sometimes thought to be a consequence of living in a liberal democracy. The idea is that in a democracy the people must be free to govern (hence all the legal fine-tuning), but in a liberal society there must be places the law cannot go (hence our vast array of legal rights, the places where libertarianism reigns). This position, though common, is wrong, as a look at other democracies or our own history shows. The truth is that both legal optimism and legal pessimism are based not on anything so grand as the nature of a free society, but on a reigning view about what legal institutions are and aren't good at. Today, we think those institutions are good at fine-tuning the behavior of everyone from automobile manufacturers to police officers. But we think the same institutions are bad at drawing moral lines—which is why we think such lines ought not to be drawn if even small minorities might not like them.

This pair of attitudes is mostly backward. The law generally does a bad job of fine-tuning. Legal regulation is like a bombing run before the days of computer-guided missiles. The law can usually hit some part of a very large target, and can reliably damage something in the general area of the target, but the surgical strike—taking out just what you want taken out while leaving the rest of the landscape untouched—is almost always beyond its capacity. One thing the law can do, though, is to state basic norms, to reinforce

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principles that can guide people in their decisions about how to order their lives. Telling people precisely what to do tends not to work, for all the reasons that command economies do not work. But giving them norms for deciding what to do—or, more precisely, reminding them of the norms they already believe in—is what law is best at.

I

Consider a typical example of contemporary legal fine-tuning. A lot of American cities have public swimming pools. Wherever there are swimming pools, there are tragic accidents: children drown. And whenever a child drowns in a swimming pool, the tragedy looks preventable. If only there had been a lifeguard on duty, or if only the lifeguard had been paying better attention, or if only the city had put up signs warning people not to dive in the shallow end of the pool, or. . . . Until recently, cities weren't liable in these cases. Often they were immune from damages for ordinary torts. Where that was not so, either the victim or his parents were generally guilty of some kind of negligence themselves (people don't usually drown in swimming pools if they're behaving themselves properly) and until recently, a negligent plaintiff couldn't recover damages.

A couple of decades ago, this changed. Courts looked at these cases and saw tragedies that need not have happened. If city governments could be induced to take more precautions with their lifeguards, we could save kids' lives. So courts began to hold cities liable, sometimes for a great deal of money.

What was supposed to happen was clear. We were supposed to get better lifeguards, more warning signs, safer pools—some of which did happen. But even with better lifeguards and more signs, there is some risk that a child will drown. When that happens, there is also some risk of very large damages. Unless the citizenry is willing to pay higher taxes (and the taxes are mostly paid by wealthier residents, who are not the ones who use municipal pools and who therefore may not be interested in ponying up more money for liability insurance), or unless the people using the pool want to pay much higher fees (and in many places they can't), cities can no longer afford municipal pools, or at least not as many pools as they otherwise could have afforded.

Perhaps that is not such a bad thing—it may mean fewer chances for poor people to swim, but it also means fewer chances for poor people's kids to drown. But of course the kids aren't inactive when they would have been swimming. Every parent knows that keeping a child busy can be a very good strategy for keeping him out of trouble. The fewer healthy activities available for poor kids, the more unhealthy activities will attract their attention. The choice is not really between a very few drownings in municipal pools and *nothing*, but between a very few drownings and whatever else poorer-than-average kids might do on the streets of American cities. So the law may have given us safer pools than we would have had without expanded tort liability, but at the cost of a few more child drug addicts, and perhaps a few deaths of a different sort. If fewer recreational facilities mean more kids doing drugs on the street, we may not be saving lives at all.

One sees this pattern again and again in American law over the past thirty years: abandonment of legal limits on liability in the interest of getting people to behave just right, with ambiguous or perverse results. Courts expand the scope of liability to protect injured consumers, and people in need of drugs cannot get them because potential manufacturers are afraid of suit. Courts broaden the use of damages for "pain and suffering" to compensate for nonmonetary injuries, and doctors get out of obstetrics because malpractice insurance is too high. Congress and courts together expand employers' potential liability for firing employees unjustly, and employers become wary of hiring people in protected classes for fear that discharge will be impossible. These developments were not the product of some venal desire to give lawyers more business, or indeed of any bad motive at all. The courts acted to right wrongs, to compensate injured people, and to eliminate needless tragedies. But the world is an endlessly complicated place, and it is very hard to get someone to behave in just the right way without affecting someone else's behavior, and very hard to know exactly what the effects will look like. The result is often to trade some tragedies for others, or simply to make more tragedies.

A second example comes from the criminal process. Before 1961, the law of search and seizure (the law that governs when and where and how police officers can look for evidence of crime) was surprisingly thin. Basically, the police were supposed to get a warrant before searching a house, but otherwise there wasn't much that the law clearly forbade. And even the warrant requirement meant little in practice, because nothing much happened to officers who disobeyed it.

Beginning in 1961, the Supreme Court changed all that. Now if evidence is illegally obtained, it is usually inadmissible in a subsequent criminal trial. Police officers have to pay vastly more attention to the law, and (not coincidentally) there is vastly more law to pay attention to. Today, one can fill a bookshelf with reference volumes devoted to the law governing things like when the police can open the glove compartment of my car, or look inside my lunch bag, or feel the contents of my jacket pocket.

Just as expanded liability was supposed to give us safer swimming pools, so it is fairly clear what all this search and seizure law was supposed to produce: better trained, better behaved police. And the police in America *are* better trained and better behaved than

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they used to be, though it is impossible to tell how much of that is due to changes in search and seizure law. (There are certainly other forces that would have pushed toward better policing even in the absence of the law's intervention.)

But this surge in legal regulation of the police has had some unintended effects. Criminal defense lawyers in America are mostly state-appointed, poorly paid, and overworked, and they do not have time to do much for their clients. They are like doctors doing triage at a military hospital after a battle: they have to pick and choose which claims to raise and which cases to contest, and the pool of claims and cases is large. Because of all the rules about police evidence gathering, overburdened public defenders find search and seizure claims a good investment. But those claims displace something—as with the kids and the swimming pools, those public defenders would be doing something else if they weren't filing motions to suppress evidence. Some of what they would be doing is raising arguments and digging for evidence that might suggest their clients' innocence. That, of course, requires much more investigation. And after all, the large majority of their clients are *not* innocent, so most of the investigation would not be helpful. But sometimes it would—some haystacks are just haystacks, but a few really do hold needles.

Today some number of innocent men and women sit in prison because their lawyers did not take the time to look hard at the facts of their cases, and instead just pressed them to plead guilty and get it over with. That number is higher because of our elaborate law of search and seizure, which siphons off lawyer time and court time from more important issues. We wind up with somewhat better behaved police (though not, if the Rodney King incident is any indication, in the area where we most need better behaved police) at the cost of reducing the level of attention paid to whether defendants did the crimes for which they are charged. The people who lose the most in this tradeoff are those who are both poor and innocent—the very ones who most need the law's protection.

II

These phenomena are produced by an attitude toward law and its creation, a bias in favor of legal fine-tuning as the solution to life's otherwise intractable problems. In most of the areas where legal regulation has expanded over the past few decades, there are real injustices to attack, but there is also great potential for making things worse. In these settings, the costs of legal error are high. The modern American pattern, though, is to embrace the goal of remedying harms, and to downplay error costs.

This is very much a contemporary bias; the classical common law tended to tilt in the opposite direction. Common-law liabilities were coupled with limits that made suit difficult. Successful plaintiffs were few and getting into court was hard. Doctrines governing things like causation (Did this defendant bring about this harm?) and standing (Is this plaintiff entitled to complain about it?) did away with many potential claims. Those who surmounted these hurdles generally found no pot of gold at the end of the rainbow; common-law doctrines on remedies were, on the whole, stingy. The strong pattern was to err on the low side, giving the wronged plaintiff something, but less than he lost.

The story was similar when it came to the various bodies of law that regulated street-level government officials—police officers, school principals, providers of social services, and the like. Various state-law immunities protected those officials from most legal liability. And prior to the 1950s and 1960s, the huge engine of constitutional rights, the source of most regulation of government actors today, largely didn't exist. Local custom usually governed.

These limits on legal regulation seem unsatisfying today, because they ruled out many deserving claims and because they undercompensated those claims that made it through the court system. But these limits also made it very hard to make it to court with bogus claims, a virtue our legal system has lost. The common law did not aim to compensate every wronged party. Instead, it aimed to ensure that *only* wronged parties would be compensated, that they would be compensated *only* by wrongdoers, and that the compensation would not be so generous as to encourage fraudulent claims. The common law's many limits on liability and recovery did a reasonably good job of accomplishing that set of modest goals. Though the system plainly did some good, much of what it strived for was to avoid doing harm.

Today courts worry much less about the harm, and are much more optimistic about their ability to do good. This last tendency is tied, in part, to another contemporary development: the greater role legal theory plays in shaping legal rules. The law that courts make used to be law that arose as a byproduct of deciding specific cases. The genius of the common law was that the focus was on the cases, not the legal rules the cases spawned. Over the course of this century, and especially over the course of the past forty years, courts and lawyers and law professors have turned their attention ever more toward the rules. More and more, the *cases* are the byproduct, the occasion for lawmaking. The law is the main event.

One sees this in Supreme Court opinions that state the facts of the case at hand and then never mention them again, discussing only the abstract legal question the Court is deciding. One also sees it in the mushrooming of public interest groups who seek out "test cases"—occasions to challenge some law or practice they don't like. Practices like these treat judicial lawmaking as an exercise in abstraction, not a necessary incident to resolving particular disputes between particular people. And as law becomes more

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of an abstract enterprise, theory becomes more central to law.

This rise in the status of theory highlights the essential quality of much contemporary American judging: its arrogance, its confident belief in its own ability to sort out the complicated crosscurrents of ordinary life. Meanwhile, the most striking thing about the older common-law system, a system whose forms we retain but whose attitudes have all but disappeared, is its humility. Legal rules emerged from experience, not from the theorizing of proud judges or professors. The legal system's vision of itself was not particularly grandiose. Disputes were supposed to be dealt with privately, out of court, if at all possible—hence the difficulty of actually getting a lawsuit into court and before a jury. Not all wrongs were to be righted—at least not in this life. Judicial decision-making was not a virtue but an unfortunate necessity, something we have to have in a world filled with sinful and contentious people, but something we should have as little of as we can get away with. Law was seen not as a way of perfecting the world, but as a means of keeping a lid on the worst sorts of behavior.

III

This legal system of the past was part of a larger system for regulating conduct—a system dominated not by legal rules but by private norms. The role of law was to work with these norms, to reinforce them, to give them a nudge, but not to take on itself the job of getting everyone to behave just as they ought. The virtue of a system of this sort is something legal theorists are only now recognizing, after two generations of rampant legal fine-tuning. The title of Robert Ellickson's wonderful book on the subject, *Order Without Law*, is suggestive, but does not get the relationship quite right. Law has always been an important *part* of the social order; but until recently it wasn't the *heart* of the social order. And in the system of one or two centuries ago, law's prime role was not necessarily to regulate. It was to teach.

A great part of what it taught was morals. This doesn't mean that the common law forbade all outward sin. Rather, the law rested on accepted moral norms, and its structure and rhetoric aimed to reinforce those norms even when a violation would not give rise to a legal claim. The law of contract was basically about keeping one's promises; it taught honesty and fair dealing. The law of tort was about taking account of others' interests even as one advances one's own; it taught adherence to the Golden Rule. The law of property was about honoring others' ownership of things and use of one's own things in ways that were not wasteful; it taught responsibility and the avoidance of covetousness.

I don't wish to be guilty of romanticizing the legal order of centuries past. The legal system Blackstone knew, like the men who made it, was far from perfect; it was filled with bizarre rules and limits—fodder for Bentham's attacks and Dickens' satires—and it allowed for many injustices, especially on matters concerning race and sex. But most of what it did was tied, fairly explicitly, to basic moral precepts, to things like honesty, responsibility, unselfishness, and diligence. As a consequence, even though the legal system of Blackstone's or Dickens' day saw less litigation that we see now, their system probably did more than ours does to support the social order by reinforcing the kinds of basic moral lessons that good parents try to teach their children.

In most areas of law, this kind of instruction is disappearing. Today courts are pessimistic about moral argument, about even the possibility of a civil conversation about right and wrong. As a consequence, the law mostly shies away from moral principle, grounding itself instead in social-engineering arguments. The law of contract, tort, and property are less about honesty, unselfishness, and responsibility, and more about the efficient allocation of resources and the reduction of accident costs. Criminal law is less about punishing evildoers than about maintaining social control. These things are not in themselves bad—reducing accident costs is a good thing, as is maintaining a fair level of social order. But we should recognize the possibility that these sorts of social goods work better as byproducts of a healthy legal system than as the system's goals. Resources may have been allocated more efficiently in a system that worried primarily about honesty and responsibility, and only secondarily about allocating resources. And we surely had better social control in a system that worried more about identifying and punishing evil than about maintaining social control.

Like legal fine-tuning, this shying away from morals is a contemporary phenomenon. A century ago Oliver Wendell Holmes, the great legal skeptic of his age, talked about law as being nothing more than a prediction of what the courts would do on particular facts. He captured this perspective with the image of law seen through the eyes of "the bad man," the man who was interested in doing whatever he could get away with. Note that even as he advanced this modern, skeptical perspective, Holmes had to use moral talk—the *bad* man—to be understood. Today, the system has adopted his perspective but dispensed with his terminology, for in order to talk about the "bad man," one must have some sense of what "bad" means. And, of course, if the legal system does not know what "bad" means, then talking about morals in law looks like a smokescreen, a veil to conceal the system's hammer coming down on people it doesn't like.

That is exactly what the Supreme Court said this past summer about Colorado's Amendment 2, the state constitutional provision that barred local gay rights ordinances. The state defended that provision in the only way it could, by saying it was a way for the majority of Colorado's citizens to reinforce right

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norms of sexual behavior. The Supreme Court did not know what to make of this defense. Justice Kennedy, the author of the Court's opinion, seemed genuinely mystified as to what it could possibly mean to say that most Coloradans want to avoid giving legal protection to behavior they think wrong. The mystery is no accident; the idea is, in today's legal system, a strange one. Kennedy translated it in the way that most judges would translate it today: He said that Amendment 2 was just an expression of animosity toward a group of people the majority didn't like. Not surprisingly, given that view of the provision, the Court struck it down.

This is a good picture of how far we have traveled. A century ago, as Holmes well knew, "good" and "bad," "right" and "wrong" were the profession's language. Today, if you use that language, you are a bigot. Law is not for reinforcing the majority's morals—indeed, that is, in the current mindset, about the most dangerous thing law could try to do. The growing number of decisions upholding a right to suicide reflect this judicial attitude, as do decades of cases upholding the right to abortion.

Now one might say here what I said earlier about the common law's approach to civil liability generally: Perhaps this is just a sound humility at work; perhaps courts rightly distrust their qualifications for moral judgment. But this misperceives how moralism works in law. The common law of Blackstone's day was not an engine for moral discovery, with courts creating new precepts for the population to follow in the way that today's Supreme Court regularly gins up new constitutional rights. Courts did not make up the idea that people ought to be honest in their dealings with one another, or that property owners should use their property responsibly. Those were the norms of the society in which the courts operated. A Christian would say they came not from the judges but from the Father; a secularist might say they came from the traditions of the populace. Either way, blinding oneself to those norms is not an exercise in humility. On the contrary, it is the height of pride.

There is another sense in which judicial reticence about morals represents a false humility. In the arenas where moral laissez-faire holds sway, courts only pretend to avoid the issues they claim to be avoiding. Being willfully blind to morals is itself a moral posture, and not a very attractive one. Millions of young men and women think differently about the rights and wrongs of abortion than they would if the law took even a modest stand against it. Millions of parents think differently about the sexual content of the magazines and TV shows their children watch than they would if the law allowed some censorship. Especially in a secular culture, people take moral cues from the law—"constitutionally protected" comes to mean "right," or at least "acceptable."

This captures the irony in the law's posture. When it comes to abortion, or doctor-assisted suicide, or pornography, courts claim to be agnostic. The law purports to leave people free to take their own stands without the interference of legal signals. But the law itself continues to send very strong signals that if a behavior is constitutionally protected, it must be all right. Neutrality is a myth; it always resolves into some form of endorsement.

The result is a vicious circle, with the law and the culture reinforcing the worst in each other. Political majorities used to support what some of us would call a socially healthy level of censorship of the popular culture. Movies, television shows, and magazine racks reflected that level of censorship. The law played a fairly small yet important role; limits were mostly self-imposed, but they were imposed in a regime in which some *legal* limits existed in the background. Between the late 1950s and the early 1970s, the courts basically took the legal limits away by declaring them unconstitutional. The supply of sex and violence in the popular culture increased, and as it did the demand increased as well. The bounds of what is acceptable in public entertainment shifted dramatically. Today, popular norms have changed; new norms have replaced older ones, and the change has accelerated a variety of social pathologies. But one major reason for the change is that the law stopped reinforcing the older norms: it sent the message that things previously thought unacceptable might not be so bad after all. This kind of signal-sending is just as interventionist as the older regime of legally reinforced censorship. The problem is that it is intervention of the wrong kind.

As we have seen even in the past two generations, the right kind of intervention can accomplish a great deal. Consider race discrimination—one of the few areas of the legal system where moral talk is still common—and the civil rights legislation and court decisions of the 1950s and 1960s. Changes in public attitudes about the rights and wrongs of racism made legal change possible. And legal change reinforced and strengthened the change in public attitudes. Public attitudes and the law formed, for a time, not a vicious circle but a virtuous one. That is exactly how legal norm reinforcement works.

Note that the circle does not depend upon detailed legal fine-tuning. The great virtue of civil rights law before about 1970 was the simplicity of its message: Blacks and whites are human beings with equal moral status; they should be treated accordingly. That message was very powerful, and it helped produce powerful changes in the way a generation of Americans saw each other. Contemporary civil rights law, on the other hand, is mostly obsessed with various forms of affirmative action—the legal fine-tuning of race relations. The law's message is no longer simple, and (not coincidentally) no longer powerful. This has led to a stop in the progression away from bigotry. None of which is to say that affirmative action is a terrible thing. But it is an *ambigu-*

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ous thing, an exercise in regulatory detail. Make it the issue, and suddenly the law of race relations no longer has the moral force it once did.

This point captures the benefit of the classical common law's humility. On the one hand, restricting legal liability left many people legally uncompensated and many wrongs unredressed. On the other hand, restricting liability maximized the law's authority—if only wrongdoers are liable, it really means something to be held liable. The recent history of the law of race relations tells the same story. The more the law stuck to the simple moral command—it's wrong to think someone less human because of his skin color—the more powerful and successful it was. The more it got mired in regulatory detail, trying to make the world perfect, the more its power was sapped. Taking moral stands need not mean telling everyone what to do. Indeed, as soon as the law starts telling everyone what to do, the moral stand tends to disappear.

IV

But isn't legal intervention in moral debates intolerant? The short answer is yes, in the same way the Civil Rights Act of 1964 is intolerant. We are much less tolerant of racism than we were forty years ago, and a good thing too. But there is another sense in which using the law to reinforce morals is actually *more* tolerant than the legal regulation we see everywhere today. The kind of law that applies to municipal pools and police search and seizure, the kind that legally compels affirmative action, is anything but tolerant. In these areas, the law tells you what to do, and you'd better do it, or else. Legal moralism can afford to be more forgiving, because the existence of the line matters more than its precise location or the penalty for crossing it. Moralism need not mean imprisonment for sin. And, critially, tolerance need not mean neutrality. Indeed, the very word "tolerate" connotes *disapproval*, a decision to let something pass even though one does not like it.

There is a lesson here for the law. We can take stands as a society, express preferences, reinforce norms, and yet not throw people in jail for disagreeing. This is the path that constitutional law, with its laissez-faire, libertarian cast, has mostly ruled out. It is the path of heavier civil regulation of abortion, of marriage and adoption laws (and perhaps tax laws) that favor traditional families, of some public acknowledgment of majoritarian religious preferences—all without prison sentences for dissidents. Colorado's Amendment 2 is a good example. It did not criminalize anything. Its victims were not barred from working or educating themselves, or from owning property, or from voting, or even from having sex as they wished. They remained free people, and rightly so—a point that cannot be emphasized too strongly. But the law still took a stand, albeit a very modest one. It drew a line.

That is probably the path we ought to follow in a society like this one, where people disagree so much about morals. It means finding solutions that seem unprincipled but are in fact ways of honoring two different principles at once. The first is the idea that law should strive for justice and justice embodies a sense of right and wrong. The second is the idea that people who disagree about fundamentals need to find a way to live together in peace. Today, we think that following the second principle means ignoring the first. But that is backward—ignoring law's moral content means enshrining amorality, and legal amorality is not a recipe for social peace. A quarter century of *Roe v. Wade* has not made us a more harmonious society. The true relationship is the other way around: Having forgotten what justice is about, we naturally find it ever harder to live together. Good houses do not stand on bad foundations.

V

Our legal system suffers from a pair of diseases, two seemingly opposite blindnesses. It thinks too well of its regulatory capacity, and too poorly of its capacity for moral leadership. It takes too exalted a view of the ability of smart people to order the world to their liking, and too dim a view of the extent and importance of sin.

By now, it should be clear enough that these are not opposite blindnesses at all. We are by nature proud—no group more so than smart people in positions of power (not a bad description of most judges), who are encouraged to think that they can reorder the world and make everything just so. We are also endlessly self-justifying, gifted at rationalizing and eager to find ways to do what we want even when the law written on our hearts tells us we are doing wrong. We need norms, standards external to ourselves to which we can hold ourselves, and to which we can hold each other. Law cannot create those standards out of whole cloth—that would be the worst sort of pride. But it does not need to. It need only reinforce the ones that are already there, giving a nudge to the rest of us to work them out in our daily living.

Our law needs a hefty dose of both humility, the ability to see one's limits, and moral courage, the ability to stand up for what is right. The secular world tends to see these virtues as opposites, but in truth they travel together. The legal system today—I have been discussing the courts, but the point applies to the whole system, not just the judiciary—suffers from a parallel pair of vices, a pair that likewise travel together. The system is too proud, too sure of its own ability. And when the issue is standing up for what's right, the law takes a powder; it turns timid. No wonder it does not attract much respect. Braggarts and cowards rarely do. FT

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The Truth About *Inherit the Wind*

Carol Iannone

In the middle of the hot summer of 1925, the famous "Monkey Trial" took place in Dayton, Tennessee, a small town of about eighteen hundred people in the Cumberland Valley. A young teacher named John Scopes stood accused of violating the Butler Act, a measure passed earlier that year to restrict the teaching of evolution in state-funded schools. The defense featured the famous attorney Clarence Darrow, and the prosecution starred the celebrated orator, populist, and three-time Democratic presidential candidate William Jennings Bryan. Nearly two hundred reporters descended upon the town, including H. L. Mencken of the Baltimore *Evening Sun* (which helped underwrite Scopes' defense). Newspapers and magazines carried innumerable articles and cartoons on the case, and telegraph operators wired stories to Europe and Australia. For the first time news of an American trial was nationally broadcast by radio, while thousands of people came to Dayton itself to take in what became a virtual carnival, complete with sideshows.

Thirty years later, Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee set what they saw as the essence of the whole extraordinary episode in their play *Inherit the Wind*, which has since become a classic of the American theater. An acclaimed 1960 movie version, directed by Stanley Kramer and starring Spencer Tracy and Frederic March, is widely available in video stores, while the original play is frequently performed in theaters around the country. Altogether, *Inherit the Wind* supplies the view most Americans have of the Scopes Trial, and it often surfaces in response to some development in the never-ending quarrels between evolutionists and creationists. When the play was revived on Broadway in 1995 by Tony Randall's National Actors Theater, Randall—citing recent renewed efforts by the Tennessee state legislature to restrict the teaching of evolution—asserted that the play is "much more timely today than when it was written."

There is finally something shallow about the high-minded social realism in much twentieth-century American drama, with its progressive and open-ended vision of life. Lawrence and Lee's skillful and often riveting collaboration in *Inherit the Wind* is no exception. As the play opens, Bertram Cates—a courageous and idealistic young teacher in Hillsboro, Tennessee—is imprisoned in the town jail for teaching evolution to his high school biology class. Matthew Harrison Brady, populist icon, three-time Democratic presidential candidate, and leader of the crusade against evolution, arrives in Hillsboro to prosecute the case, where he is greeted by the mayor and a large, enthusiastic crowd singing "Give me that old-time religion."

Also arriving in Hillsboro, however, is E. K. Hornbeck of the Baltimore *Herald*, who has championed Cates in his columns and is greatly and haughtily amused at the spectacle of ignorance and bigotry before him. Speaking in a kind of ironic poetry-patter, he constantly mocks Brady and the pious provincialism that supports him: "Ahhhh, Hillsboro—Heavenly Hillsboro / The buckle on the Bible Belt." Hornbeck announces that the lone, embattled Cates will have a defender, courtesy of the *Herald*—the great Henry Drummond, who sidles into town later that evening with little notice. Brady is adored and applauded as he pontificates about the evils of evolution and gobbles large amounts of food, but poor Drummond is shunned by the townspeople.

In the course of the trial, Brady starts out confidently, full of self-righteousness and ready rhetoric about "the Revealed Word." Not only are the courtroom spectators clearly with Brady, but the judge excludes Drummond's scientific witnesses on the grounds that evolution itself is not on trial. Desperate

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for some way to challenge the law under which Cates stands accused, Drummond decides to put Brady on the stand as an expert on the Bible, and Brady accepts the challenge with gusto. The ensuing examination turns the case around: Drummond exposes Brady's untenable literal acceptance of the Bible, not to mention his understanding of himself as a self-anointed prophet. The crowd begins to laugh at Brady, and, after the courtroom empties, he seeks comfort in the bosom of his mothering wife.

Though the jury brings in the inevitable guilty verdict, it is clear that Drummond has triumphed—and along with him, freedom of thought. The judge charges Cates a token fine of one hundred dollars. Protesting the light punishment, Brady tries to make what he considers an all-important closing speech, but the judge, embarrassed at the negative publicity the town has received, precipitately ends the trial. Sputtering and shouting, Brady collapses and is taken from the courtroom and shortly afterward dies.

Along the way, the play develops a conventional subplot concerning Cates' fiancee, Rachel Brown, who at first wants him to recant. Tricked by Brady into testifying about private discussions that tend to incriminate Cates as a nonbeliever, she eventually sees her mistake and finds the strength to stand beside him. Her father Jeremiah is a fire-and-brimstone preacher who, in a vengeful prayer meeting the first night of the trial, nearly scares the wits out of his daughter until the more benign Brady intervenes. The film version of *Inherit the Wind* shows the town's populace burning Cates and Drummond in effigy and throwing rocks through the window of Cates' cell. The play itself lacks these incidents, but indicates that the townspeople's response to Cates is ugly and hateful. As Drummond puts it, "You murder a wife, it isn't nearly as bad as murdering an old wives' tale."

And yet, in discussing Brady's death after the trial, Drummond repudiates the journalist Hornbeck's scathing ridicule. As Drummond sees it, Brady was a once-great man who had ceased to move forward. When Drummond, in defense of Brady, shows that he too knows the Bible, Hornbeck charges him with being even more religious than Brady was. In its closing scenes, the play emphasizes again what it suggested throughout: Brady's fundamentalism is wrong, but so is Hornbeck's godless cynicism. The enlightened and humane Drummond's intention was not to tear down legitimate belief but only to fight ignorance and bigotry. In the last scene he picks up Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* and the Bible, weighs them thoughtfully in his hands, and exits confidently with both books in his briefcase.

While *Inherit the Wind* remains faithful to the broad outlines of the historical events it portrays, it flagrantly distorts the details, and neither the fictionalized names nor the cover of artistic license can excuse what amounts to an ideologically motivated hoax. The film, for example, depicts Cates arrested in the act of teaching evolution by a grim posse of morally offended citizens, while in fact no effort was made to enforce the Butler Act. What actually brought the issue to light—never mentioned in play or film—was that the American Civil Liberties Union advertised for someone to challenge the law. Several Dayton citizens, hoping the publicity would benefit their town, approached Scopes as a possible candidate. Scopes was actually a mathematics teacher and athletic coach and had only briefly substituted as a biology teacher. He did not remember teaching evolution, but he had used the standard textbook, Hunter's *Civic Biology*, which contained a short section on the subject. Scopes was surprised to hear how relatively knowledgeable the student witnesses were, and he speculated that they must have picked up what they knew somewhere else and come to associate it with his class. Scopes himself knew little beyond the rudiments, and the defense thought it best to keep him off the stand, where his lack of knowledge (not to mention his uncertainty as to whether he had taught the subject) might prove embarrassing.

Far from being imprisoned, let alone hung in effigy, Scopes was free after his indictment. After traveling to New York to meet the ACLU Executive Board that included Norman Thomas and Felix Frankfurter, he lived in his Dayton boarding house, continuing to have friendly intercourse with the townspeople and greeting the visitors streaming into town. In fact, there was no prison sentence connected to violation of the Butler Act. Bryan actually argued against even a monetary fine, and—far from demanding a harsher penalty for Scopes—offered to pay the defendant's fine himself. Scopes attended a dinner given by the Dayton Progressive Club in honor of Bryan's arrival, and Bryan, famous for remembering people, recognized Scopes as one of a gaggle of giggling graduates he had addressed at a high school commencement six years earlier. Bryan's kindness and sincerity were acknowledged even by his enemies, and he spoke amiably to Scopes, insisting they could be friends despite their disagreement.

As for Darrow, he was greeted on his arrival in Dayton by a crowd about as large and friendly as the one that had greeted Bryan—not, as Drummond is, by a little girl screaming "Devil" in the play or a scowling mountaineer in the film. Darrow was feted at a Progressive Club dinner just as Bryan was. Being a folksy, small-town type himself, Darrow gained the good graces of the locals, and many of the spectators at the trial showed support for the defense. As a result of the perceived importance of the case, Darrow had at his side a defense team that included Arthur Garfield Hays of the ACLU, the famed international divorce lawyer Dudley Field Malone (who had served as Bryan's Undersecretary of State in the Wilson

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Administration), and constitutional expert John Randolph Neal. Scopes later wrote that he couldn't have done better if he'd had all the money in the world.

In *Inherit the Wind,* Cates loses his teaching job. As he makes his closing statement before being sentenced, mentioning that he is a schoolteacher, an old crone shrills out, "Not any more you ain't!" But Scopes reported in his memoir that his job was still open to him even after the verdict. People involved in his defense offered him a scholarship for graduate school, however, and he went to the University of Chicago to study geology. He believed that a later fellowship was denied him because of the trial controversy, but he did have an active career as a geologist.

The essential plot elements of *Inherit the Wind*—the lonely stand of the brave individualist against the small-minded bigotry of the townspeople, Cates' fear and trembling as he waits in his prison cell, the threat of ruin hanging over his head ("The Scopes character and his fiancee play each scene as if he were on the way to the electric chair," wrote one film reviewer)—are pure fabrication. Far from living in fear, Scopes went swimming during one hot lunchtime recess with two of the young assistant prosecutors (including Bryan's son). The reprimand Scopes received from defense attorney Hays when they were late getting back to the courtroom may have been the roughest treatment he received.

So, too, *Inherit the Wind* distorts its Bryan figure. The play does allow a certain benignity, color, and agility to the man, if only to give Drummond a worthy adversary, but in many ways it belittles him. Years after the trial, the playwrights met with Hays, who may have influenced their picture of Bryan. But many journalistic accounts even at the time depicted a past-his-prime Bryan trailing clouds of fundamentalist ignorance and, like Brady, squirming in distress on the witness stand under his adversary's questioning. Many reporters seemed to share the prejudices of Mencken, who ridiculed Bryan in print as "a tinpot pope in the coca-cola belt." The historian R. M. Cornelius, who has written a great deal on the Scopes Trial, reports, "A review of the trial press coverage reveals that the typical newsman had both an ear for a good story and a mouth hungry for Bryan's blood." One reporter never even attended the trial sessions, remarking, "I don't have to know what's going on; I know what my paper wants me to write." During the famous cross-examination by Darrow only six reporters were present; the others were taking a long lunch, thinking that the most important portions of the trial had passed. (Scopes later helped the absentee reporters file their stories.) The number of reporters dwindled during the trial, and even Mencken did not stay through the whole eight days.

A review of the actual transcript reveals that Bryan was often exuberant, funny, discerning, and focused during the trial. It also shows, contrary to *Inherit the Wind,* that he was familiar with Darwin, and may even have understood the evolutionary doctrine better than his adversaries, or at least had a better idea of what was really at stake. He did have some embarrassing moments during the ninety minutes of Darrow's relentless questioning, but he often gave as good as he got.

Bryan was not a biblical literalist. He volunteered to Darrow—it was not wormed out of him, as the play suggests—that the "days" in the biblical account of creation were not twenty-four hour days; he cited Genesis 2:4, in which the word "generations" seems to be used as a substitute for "days." He did not insist that the "sun stood still" in Joshua 10:13, but explained that the Bible was using the language of the time. At the same time he did not yield on his belief in miracles and the primacy of divine power. If his supporters felt disappointment over Bryan's testimony—the play makes much of the crowd's turning on him—it was not because he looked stupid as a defender of crude fundamentalism, but because he wasn't a defender of crude fundamentalism.

Bryan's real mistake was to take the stand at all, but he seemed to feel he had to accept Darrow's challenge to testify or implicitly admit the indefensibility of his position, and he later felt that he had at least stood his ground. "These gentlemen," he said on the stand, "came here to try revealed religion. I am here to defend it, and they can ask me any questions they please." For his part, Darrow realized that neither the constitutionality of the Butler Act nor the truth of evolution could be settled in Dayton, but he relished the publicity he could gain for his cause: "Preventing bigots and ignoramuses from controlling the education of the United States," as he memorably put it.

But it is certainly not true that Bryan and his beliefs were crushed in Dayton. Scopes himself, even while sporadically trying to render a portrait of a broken man, remarked that the Great Commoner seemed amazingly buoyant during the trial, always remaining "the exuberant Bryan who could survive any defeat." And while the antievolutionary cause may have suffered embarrassment, the guilty verdict was overturned a year later only on a technicality. Several state laws similar to the Butler Act were not declared unconstitutional until 1968.

It is true that Bryan was not able to deliver the lengthy closing statement he considered his life's "mountain peak," but not because the judge cut short the trial. Rather, after the cross-examination of Bryan (which was stricken from the record the following day), Darrow stated his willingness to accept a guilty verdict in order to move to appeal. This obviated the need for closing statements. Darrow later admitted that the defense had purposely wanted to deprive Bryan of his closing statement for fear of his legendary oratorical powers.

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Moreover, Bryan did not have a mortal stroke in the courtroom, but died five days after the trial. His death may have been due partly to exhaustion and stress, but he also suffered from a diabetic condition that he did not carefully watch. He passed away peacefully during an afternoon nap and after a heavy meal. (The irreverent line spoken by the cynical Hornbeck at Brady's death—"He died of a busted belly"—was actually Darrow's private remark on hearing that Bryan had died.) But as historian Lawrence W. Levine puts it, if Bryan was destroyed by the trial, "he did a masterly job of concealing it during the five days of life remaining to him." Bryan took heart in the legal victory and set himself to the fight with renewed vigor. He traveled, gave speeches, and arranged for publication of the address he had not been permitted to deliver. Scopes himself denied that the trial killed Bryan, though perhaps because he did not want his side to bear the onus.

Even in small things, *Inherit the Wind* goes out of its way to diminish Bryan. Drummond derides the honorary title of "Colonel" that Hillsboro bestows upon Brady, protesting, "I am not familiar with Mr. Brady's military record." In fact, Bryan had been a colonel in the U.S. Army during the Spanish-American War (though he never saw combat). The play's Brady is mothered by a wife who cradles him in her bosom, murmuring, "Baby, Baby," though Bryan's wife was actually a semi-invalid of whom he was protective and solicitous.

These systematic alterations serve a single, obvious end: to ridicule Bryan and his followers for their backwardness and religious prejudice. The stage directions instruct, "It is important to the concept of the play that the town is visible always, looming there, as much on trial as the individual defendant." The thinker is in jail, while the "morons" (as Mencken called them) roam free—led by Brady, "the idol of all Morondom" (as Darrow later termed Bryan). The stage directions indicate the time of the play as "Not too long ago," and the playwrights' note—always included in any production's program—declares ominously, "It might have been yesterday. It could be tomorrow." The trial, as Arthur Garfield Hays put it, "was a battle between two types of mind—the rigid, orthodox, accepting, unyielding, narrow, conventional mind, and the broad, liberal, critical, cynical, skeptical, and tolerant mind."

But was it really so simple? Since much of Bryan's political progressivism is in keeping with the playwrights' own views, they split the Bryan figure in two—the "enlightened" progressive champion of the common man versus the "bigoted" religious fundamentalist. Drummond, who had supported Brady in two of his presidential bids (as Darrow had supported Bryan in real life), says at Brady's death, "A giant once lived in that body. But Matt Brady got lost. Because he was looking for God too high up and too far away." In fact, the two sides of Bryan, the democratic and the religious, were complementary. According to historian LeRoy Ashby, Bryan was sustained by "the combined heritages of evangelical faith and the republicanism of the nation's revolutionary era." The democracy he worked for was built upon "the virtuous citizen," and he worried that Darwinism "would cause people to lose a sense of God's presence. . . . It justified an economic jungle and 'discourages those who labor for the improvement of man's condition.'" Convinced as he was that belief in God and in man's spiritual nature was vital to human progress and a just social order, Bryan was troubled by numerous reports he had received of young people who had lost their faith under the tutelage of skeptical, even atheistic, professors. Bryan believed in separation of church and state, but, according to Ashby, he felt such stories of lost faith indicated "that the state was in fact teaching against religion, and that atheists and evolutionists were enjoying something against which democratic reformers had long battled—special privileges."

Although *Inherit the Wind* presents a Bryan torn by fear of change, it was actually Darrow who was caught in contradictions. Darrow was an agnostic determinist—the play's suggestion that Drummond may be "more religious" than Brady is another fabrication—who believed that human beings are driven by forces beyond their control. Yet in the Scopes Trial he defended the individual mind and freedom of thought. Darrow's questions to Scopes' students—"Did it hurt you any?", Do you "still believe in church although you were told all life comes from a single cell?" (the play adds "Haven't murdered anybody since breakfast?")—were simply disingenuous. One year earlier, Darrow had defended Nathan Leopold and Richard Loeb, two brilliant university students who murdered a boy for the intellectual experience of committing the perfect crime. At Dayton, Bryan read out Darrow's famous excuse for the earlier defendants: "Is there any blame attached because somebody took Nietzsche's philosophy seriously and fashioned his life on it? . . . Your Honor, it is hardly fair to hang a nineteen-year-old boy for the philosophy that was taught him at the university." As Richard Weaver commented on Bryan's use of the Leopold and Loeb record: "To Darrow's previous position that the doctrine of Nietzsche is capable of immoral influence, Bryan responded that the doctrine of evolution is likewise capable of immoral influence."

Both the play and the movie version of *Inherit the Wind* vastly oversimplify religion's relation to evolution. The play insists that there is no contradiction between Christianity and Darwinism. "It is only a matter of the method He has chosen in creation," Maynard M. Metcalf, a zoologist from Oberlin College, declared in expert testimony permitted at the trial (though not before the jury). As the play's Cates

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puts it, "Living comes from a long miracle, it didn't just happen in seven days." The defense, both actual and fictional, wanted to isolate an ignorant, biblical literalism as the only kind of religion that disputes evolution. And, indeed, they have been joined in this view by many mainstream religious leaders in the seventy years since. This understanding has been challenged more recently, however, by such credible figures as Phillip E. Johnson of the University of California, and William B. Provine, an historian of science from Cornell. A leading adherent of Darwinian evolution, Provine has observed that "prominent evolutionists have joined with equally prominent theologians and religious leaders to sweep under the rug the incompatibilities of evolution and religion." Provine insists that evolution finds no intelligent design operating in nature and "no such thing as immortality or life after death." In fact, according to Provine, "we're produced by a process that gives not one damn about us."

Peter Steinfels, the *New York Times* religion reporter, heard Provine speak at a symposium on the Scopes Trial held at Vanderbilt University in 1995 and concluded: "It is easy to look back at the battle between rural piety and city cynicism waged seventy years ago in the Dayton courthouse, and feel superior. But maybe those people were right in thinking that something very important was at stake." The man who has been made a laughing stock thanks in part to *Inherit the Wind* seems actually to have understood all this in 1925. "The evolutionists have not been honest with the public," declared Bryan (who was, for what it's worth, a member of the American Academy for the Advancement of Science). He cautioned that "Christians who have allowed themselves to be deceived into believing that evolution is a beneficent, or even a rational, process have been associating with those who either do not understand its implications or dare not avow their knowledge of these implications." In *Inherit the Wind*, Drummond gives a tough-sounding speech about the tradeoffs of progress, instructing the jury that every advance of civilization requires that something be surrendered: "Darwin moved us forward to a hilltop, where we could look back and see the way from which we came. But for this view, this insight, this knowledge, we must abandon our faith in the pleasant poetry of Genesis." Yet, by play's end, Drummond is purveying some pleasant poetry of his own, indicating that Darwin and the Bible are compatible for all but a few religious fanatics.

Even the certainty of the doctrine of evolution was considerably oversimplified in both the real Scopes Trial and the fictional version in *Inherit the Wind*. Professor Metcalf testified at the real trial, "It is impossible for a normal human being, cognizant of the facts, to have the slightest doubt about the fact of evolution," and the fictional Drummond argues, "What Bertram Cates spoke quietly one spring afternoon in the Hillsboro High School is . . . incontrovertible as geometry in every enlightened community of minds."

But is it? Bryan shrewdly described evolution as a hypothesis—"millions of guesses strung together"—rather than proven theory. And he knew what was missing: "There is not a scientist in all the world who can trace one single species to any other." Nearly a century and a half after the publication of *On the Origin of Species*, the proof for Darwin's theory remains spotty, according to Phillip E. Johnson and others. Bryan sounds at least reasonable when he argues, "If the results of evolution were unimportant, one might require less proof in support of the hypothesis, but before accepting a new philosophy of life, built upon a materialistic foundation, we have reason to demand something more than guesses."

Ultimately, however, the truth of evolution is not the theme of *Inherit the Wind*, but the "right to think," and even the "right to be wrong." (The film adds a "right to be lonely" for the misanthropic Hornbeck.) What the play seeks ultimately to defend are the larger prerogatives of "the broad, liberal, critical, cynical, skeptical, and tolerant mind." After the trial, Cates' fiancee Rachel, who has left her father's joylessly pious household, recites the lesson she has learned as she joins the forces of the enlightened:

> You see, I haven't really thought very much. I was always afraid of what I might think—so it seemed safer not to think at all. But now I know. A thought is like a child inside our body. It has to be born. . . . Bad or good, it doesn't make any difference. The ideas have to come out—like children.

Of course, such a simple choice between bigotry and enlightenment is central to the contemporary liberal vision of which *Inherit the Wind* is a typical expression. But while it stands nominally for tolerance, latitude, and freedom of thought, the play is full of the self-righteous certainty that it deplores in the fundamentalist camp. Some critics have detected the play's sanctimonious tone—"bigotry in reverse," as Andrew Sarris called it—even while appreciating its dramatic quality and well-written leading roles. The play reveals a great deal about a mentality that demands open-mindedness and excoriates dogmatism, only to advance its own certainties more insistently—that promotes tolerance and intellectual integrity but stoops to vilifying the opposition, falsifying reality, and distorting history in the service of its agenda.

In fact, a more historically accurate dramatization of the Scopes Trial than *Inherit the Wind* might have been far richer and more interesting—and might also have given its audiences a genuine dramatic tragedy to watch. It would not have sent its audience home full of moral superiority and happy thoughts about

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the march of progress. The truth is not that Bryan was wrong about the dangers of the philosophical materialism that Darwinism presupposes but that he was right, not that he was a once great man disfigured by fear of the future but that he was one of the few to see where a future devoid of the transcendent would lead. The antievolutionist crusade to control what is taught in the schools may not have been the answer, and Bryan's own approach may have been too narrow. But the real tragedy lies in the losing fight that he and others like him waged against a modernity increasingly deprived of spiritual foundations. FT

If God Is Any Great Returning

If God is any great returning,
a listening to some new witness
bidding within,
any hard going back
to where in a rootless time
you quit,
as Bonhoeffer left life in New York
to return to his death in a Nazi jail,
so that now it's your turn
at the bitter feast of eating crow,
saying I'm sorry
to every cynical hello
after your selfish goodbye;
If God is any great returning,
your soul's yearning,
lonely and longing
for the path lost or deserted,
the cause dropped in its infancy
as too childish, too hard, too frail,
too sure to fail to bother,
but now somehow the only way
worthy of your life,
your death;
If God is any great returning,
and your burning soul
has spun your compass about
so that you are finally en route home
like the prodigal,
then go quickly
expecting to feast with the Father
even though your whining brother
may not yet dine with you
and in truth
awaits proof, even as he should,
that you are really home
for good.

Warren L. Molton

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Review Essay

The Several-Storied Thomas Merton

Robert Royal

It is a timeworn literary conceit, but some writers seem to be several people. There always exists some disparity, of course, between writers and their work. Yet a kind of multiple personality disorder keeps turning up in writers—and writers with a religious bent seem particularly susceptible, as they keep in play not only complex human realities but divine realities as well. Dostoyevsky, Graham Greene, Walker Percy, and many other distinguished names attest to how common a phenomenon this is. But of all the great modern religious writers, no one harbored within himself a larger cast of dramatis personae than Thomas Merton.

First, there is Merton the Contemplative, who emerges in the 1948 autobiographical account of his conversion to Catholicism and entrance into a Trappist monastery, *The Seven Storey Mountain*. Merton had a true contemplative vocation, though he agonized about its authenticity at several points. The contemplative life formed the deepest (though not always the dominant) part of his personality. Merton came to contemplation partly because of a pure attraction to wordless union with the absolute, partly because of an intense desire to flee a sinful self and world. In most contemplatives, these two motives gradually coalesce. But in Merton they remained in stark and painful contrast.

It did not help that Merton the Contemplative confronted Merton the Writer. Even for a man not vowed to silence, Merton's several dozen books would have been an extraordinary output. But adding the journals—four volumes have now appeared and the whole will run to seven volumes totaling about 3,500 large pages—we begin to glimpse a serious conflict. Can a man committed to the wordless apophatic way and a forgetting of self be preoccupied with recording—and publishing—every thought and act? Gregory Zilboorg, a convert himself and a skilled psychoanalyst, warned Merton in the 1950s that his desire to leave the Trappist communal silence for the even more withdrawn life of a hermit was schizophrenic: "You want a hermitage in Times Square with a large sign over it saying '*Hermit.*'"

Though not entirely fair to Merton, Zilboorg had a point. Toward the end of *The Seven Storey Mountain*, Merton had already recognized that:

> There was this shadow, this double, this writer, who had followed me into the cloister. . . . He rides my shoulders, sometimes, like the old man of the sea. I cannot lose him. He still wears the name of Thomas Merton. Is it the name of an enemy? . . . Maybe in the end he will kill me, he will drink my blood. Nobody seems to understand that one of us has got to die.

Later, Merton would accept writing as a parallel vocation. But in his frequent references to the soul's "hidden wholeness," his own experience of a war-to-the-death within gives the phrase special poignancy.

There were also other Mertons, among the more troublesome: the Bohemian. This Merton felt a constant need to be an outsider. When Merton lived in the world, it took the usual forms. He had aspirations to being an experimental writer and poet (his *Collected Poems*, which show real innovation but great unevenness, run to almost 1,000 pages). He listened to jazz, dabbled in leftist politics, hit the bottle pretty hard, smoked heavily, had his share of girlfriends, and did a bit of drawing. All relatively harmless, but some incongruous holdover bedeviled Merton the monk. Should a Trappist be interested in Henry Miller? Or follow Joan Baez? Or Bob Dylan? As late as 1959 (after eighteen years in the abbey), Merton was reading books like James Thurber's *The Years with Ross*, an account of life under Harold

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Ross, editor of the *New Yorker*. The *New Yorker* of the fifties was more staid than its current incarnation, and Merton often claimed the chic ads reminded him of everything in the world he had fled. But there was something odd in a monk even being interested in a magazine like the *New Yorker*. Merton sometimes took pride in what he regarded as the fact that poets and monks are marginal people. The Trappist life occasionally seemed good to him because it represented the greatest nonconformity in the world.

A Fourth Merton, one still well known, is the Social Activist. The fifties and early sixties provided him with a series of social questions to ponder: the Cold War, nuclear arms, the peace movement, the civil rights movement, third-worldism, and the materialism of both America and Russia. A cloistered monk is not in the best position to be well-informed about the outside world. But Merton's sheer skill as a writer coupled with the deep monastic perspective made him a powerful voice in social causes.

Intimately interwoven with these four Mertons is someone we are forced to call Merton the Man. This Fifth Business never entirely settled down. The Contemplative, as may be seen in painful detail in the journals, is constantly vacillating, though in his public work Merton displays spiritual mastery. The Writer is gifted, but so much so that he has a tendency toward glibness. The Bohemian Merton got the others into any number of scrapes, and the Activist Merton often got carried away by currents in the sixties that—in retrospect—were not entirely fair to American society. Yet when all is said and done, Merton remains one of the great contemplative spirits of the century.

Merton's early life is well known from *The Seven Storey Mountain*. He was born in 1915 in the French village of Prades. His father, Owen Merton, was a painter and—when financial need demanded—a part-time musician who had left his native New Zealand seeking a wider world. His mother, Ruth, was an American of Quaker background with artistic ambitions. They met in Paris as art students and were working in the south of France when Thomas was born.

Artistic parents are usually both a blessing and a curse, and the Mertons were no exception. Thomas inherited gifts of insight that frequently outran even his considerable talents as a writer. His conversion would owe much to aesthetic intuitions. Yet in his mature years he believed that some cold ambition in his mother had early made him feel unworthy and led to a distance from women. Ruth died when Merton was only six, but his descriptions of her are not nostalgic. On the contrary, he notes the narrowness and provincialism on that side of the family, both socially and religiously.

Merton's father became even more restless after Ruth's death. He took Thomas with him to Cape Cod, Bermuda, New York, England, and, eventually, back to France. Thomas spent three years in a dismal lycée in the south of France, but he also absorbed there something of the medieval Catholicism of the region, which would play a large role in his future. Though he developed a facility for foreign languages, it was a relief when his father told him one day to pack up for a move to England.

As it turned out, Merton did not like England much better than France. His schools were more congenial and he became popular and wrote a great deal. But the smug wealth of 1920s Britain repelled him. He also felt that the Church of England had become a religion of social manners. Within a few years his father developed brain cancer and suffered a long, painful death. Sometime before he fell ill, Owen Merton had had a religious conversion, and Thomas was later to speculate about what purpose that suffering may have served in his father's spiritual development. But by fifteen, Merton had lost both parents.

He won a modest scholarship to Cambridge, but the posh Cambridge of the thirties proved a bad environment. If Merton was no worse than many other undergraduates, he was no better either. Besides drinking heavily, neglecting his studies, and engaging in the usual undergraduate pranks, he also fathered a child with a "lower class" girl (this episode, duly recorded by Merton, was excised by the Trappist censors from *The Seven Storey Mountain*). Legal niceties were tidied up by Tom Bennett, his guardian. But Bennett wrote to Merton on Long Island during the summer holiday advising him that his grades were not good enough to make a return to England worthwhile.

Merton settled down for a while with his brother and American grandparents on Long Island and started attending Columbia in 1935. He liked the American plainness of Columbia, but caroused a great deal there too. He was fortunate in soon discovering Mark Van Doren as a teacher and making such lifelong friends as the poet Robert Lax, the publisher James Laughlin, and Robert Giroux. Always energetic, he played sports and wrote for undergraduate publications. Given the chaotic habits of his early years, it was not a bad life.

But this rough equilibrium was upset when both grandparents died within a short time of one another. The sudden aloneness precipitated Merton into a kind of crisis that recurred several times later. He began having nervous attacks on the Long Island Railroad and in Manhattan. Doctors could do very little to help him. His friend Robert Lax was going through something similar, and they shared a sense of the "abyss that walked around in front of our feet . . . and kept making us dizzy and afraid of trains and high places." In Merton's case, it is not difficult to see this as a psychosomatic symptom of his second orphanhood.

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For some reason, Merton's literary and philosophical reading turned toward Catholicism. He wrote a senior thesis on William Blake as seen through Jacques Maritain's interpretation of Thomistic aesthetics. He planned a doctoral dissertation on Gerard Manley Hopkins. Memories of France began to take hold of his imagination. Catholic thought appealed to him in the books he read and the people he came to know (particularly a part-time lecturer in medieval philosophy at Columbia, Dan Walsh). But there was no little aesthetic element in Merton's religious evolution, and the spiritual and sensual beauties of Catholic life animate *The Seven Storey Mountain.*

Merton took instruction and was baptized at Corpus Christi Church near Columbia. Almost immediately, perhaps even before the baptism, he began thinking he had a vocation. He applied to the Franciscans and was accepted. But when he revealed his illegitimate child, they found it an impediment. He turned briefly to working with the Baroness Catherine De Hueck at Friendship House in Harlem and might have become a religious social worker had he not made a retreat at the Trappist Abbey of Gethsemani in rural Kentucky. Someone warned him as he was leaving: "Don't let them change you." He responded, "It would be a good thing if they changed me." In 1941, a few days after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, age twenty-six, Thomas Merton entered Gethsemani as a postulant.

When Merton told this tale in *The Seven Storey Mountain,* he became an instant sensation. Clare Booth Luce, Evelyn Waugh, and other distinguished Catholics praised him. The first hardcover edition sold 600,000 copies; at one point, an unprecedented 10,000 orders were coming in a day. It was 1948, and Merton had touched a nerve, not only in America but all over the world. The spiritual exhaustion after the Second World War stimulated interest in inspirational religious stories. Novices began flooding into Gethsemani. Within a decade, a monastery built to house 70 monks had attracted 270. New foundations were begun in America and abroad. Paradoxically, the sheer numbers became a serious factor in Merton's dislike of communal life in the 1950s. He thought of becoming a Carthusian, or of going to Latin America, and let everyone know of his discontent.

But there were other reasons for his restlessness. *The Seven Storey Mountain* had given people an impression of Merton as a traditional Catholic writer. But the other Mertons were lurking in the background, and sometimes in the foreground. He had written a book with the charms and enthusiasms of youth; it would be unrepresentative of his more mature thought. Later, he protested that he had a right not to be turned into a myth for children at American parochial schools. And in fact he soon found himself in conflict with the Cistercian life as then lived and with American society in the 1950s.

Merton entered another crisis. Writer's block struck in the mid-1950s, though books continued to appear. Nervous attacks recurred. The reasons for this turmoil are complicated, but the upshot was that Merton began to ask whether he had made the right choice in becoming a Trappist. He had particular troubles with communal living, censorship, meaningless disciplines, and, above all, the authority of the abbot, Dom James Fox.

Dom James could be a firm man, but he was quite intelligent, and other monks attest to his kindness and understanding. The abbot probably sensed that relaxing disciplines over Merton the Bohemian and the Writer could lead to disaster—and perhaps Merton the Contemplative did as well. For a decade, they locked horns and the right was not always on Merton's side. It is hard to sympathize with the restive Mertons against the Contemplative Merton who joined the Trappists fully knowing and desiring a life of restrictions on correspondence, visitors, and involvement with the outside world.

In the 1960s that world came to the fore in his work. The Contemplative who fled the world, however, was not always a good advisor for the Activist. The Contemplative had not fared well in European or American society, and had taken this as proof that those societies were not doing well either. This led him to a number of mistaken or exaggerated judgments. During the fifties he accepted a theory of the moral equivalence of the United States and the Soviet Union. The Vietnam War abroad and the civil rights struggle at home, he came to believe, revealed a totalitarian impulse in America and he wrote of the possible emergence of a Nazi-like racial regime in the United States.

Merton was tempted—primarily because of his friendship at Gethsemani with the poet and monk Ernesto Cardenal, who would later serve in the Sandinista government in Nicargaua—to seek reassignment to Latin America. He had enjoyed a pre-Castro visit to Cuba before he became a monk, and he admired and translated several Latin American poets. Like many activists, he regarded the Latin problem as a U.S. creation, and he wondered in his journals whether he would not be ashamed of being North American if he went south. In his essay "A Letter to Pablo Antonio Cuadra Concerning Giants," he almost seems to think a nuclear exchange that would destroy the United States and Europe would be a fitting recompense for the European conquest.

Merton wrote forcefully against nuclear deterrence. A collection of his social writing from the 1960s, *Seeds of Destruction,* contains some of Merton's most penetrating analyses of modern just-war issues. Merton objected to Augustine's notion of right intention—which Merton thought could be easily rationalized—and to his pessimism. He sug-

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gested that Christians get rid of "Augustinian assumptions and take a new view of man, of society, and of war itself." Always sophisticated and eloquent in this pursuit, Merton tried to make clear that this was not soft-headed pacifism or optimism, but the core teaching of *Pacem in Terris*.

However, Merton also saw serious contradictions within the "peace" movement. He rebuked those who claimed to be pacifist yet advocated armed revolution in the Third World. In 1965, as the anti-Vietnam War demonstrations were beginning to peak, a young member of the Catholic Peace Fellowship burned himself alive, causing Merton to observe that both the country and the peace movement had an air of absurdity and frenzy. But at times he contributed to the frenzy. When, for instance, his friends Daniel and Philip Berrigan were convicted, he exploded, "This is a totalitarian society in which freedom is pure illusion."

The frequent tendency of Merton the Activist to overstatement is telling. Merton was by background mostly a European. And lacking any experience of the moral realism and decency of most Americans, he tended to judge all of American society through the lens of heated political controversies and the usual intellectual complaints about the bourgeoisie. His essays on civil rights, for example, are heartfelt and penetrating, but are not even a very good description of the predicament of the American liberal. The kind of moderation Merton showed in spiritual and moral questions rarely appears in his social commentary. He was *angry* about political issues in the early 1960s.

He displayed similar reactions toward the reform movement in the church. Merton made a gradual turn from a convert's effusive gratitude to the type of critical stance usually associated with cradle Catholics. Partly this was a reaction to monastic restrictions and a widening and deepening of his knowledge of human nature. But there was a more rebellious element in him as well. He admired the early Hans Küng and engaged in a heated correspondence with Rosemary Ruether, defending himself from her criticism of the unnatural monastic life with the surprising claim that he was for all intents and purposes laicized in his separate hermitage. And yet, although he welcomed reform in the monastery and in the liturgy, when they actually came he thought both had been superficial and ill-advised. He warned that much of what was going on was being distorted by self-justifying activism.

The mid-1960s brought him to the brink of disaster. Merton had a back problem requiring an operation at a Catholic hospital in Louisville. When he recovered from the anesthesia, he was anxious that he had missed daily communion. He began making notes on Meister Eckhart. His long-desired hermitage awaited him back at Gethsemani. To the eye, it was business as usual.

But a pretty young student nurse came in. A Catholic, she knew of Merton from a book her father had given her. Something erupted between them—even though she had a fiancé in Chicago. On leaving the hospital, he wrote her about needing friendship. She wrote back, instructed by him to mark the envelope "conscience matter" (lest the superiors read the correspondence). Under "conscience matter," Merton sent a declaration of love. Thus began a series of deceptions, and Merton only narrowly avoided the shipwreck of his monastic vows because of the impossibility of the whole situation.

Until the later volumes of his journals appear, we will not have Merton's complete account of the episode. But we know that during the storm, Merton used friends to carry messages and provide meeting places. He ignored warnings and even thought of a chaste marriage (though chastity was not particularly high in his thought at that point). They met for dinner and drinks, wine and picnics, listened to music together. Merton wondered how he could live without her.

Dom James found out about the relationship (another monk overheard a telephone conversation), and ordered Merton not to contact the young woman again, but surreptitious contacts went on for some months. Biographers such as Michael Mott agree that the incident reflects several unresolved conflicts in Merton. To his credit, Merton wanted it eventually to be known for what it said about his neediness and incompleteness. Some of the available notes are striking: "Passing near the hospital, I thought I was slowly being torn in half. Then several times while I was reciting the office, felt silent cries come slowly tearing and rending their way up out of the very ground of my being." Though he was wrong, it is hard to wholly condemn him. The atmosphere of the 1960s drove other people into much worse, and in the end he did the right thing.

Or seemed to. All his life in the monastery, Merton had been dogged by stories that he had abandoned his vocation or run off with some woman. When he was allowed to go to Asia for a conference in 1968, he had to leave discreetly so as not to stir up rumors. But the Asia trip raises questions all the same. Merton gives several indications in his posthumous *Asian Journal* that he intended to return to Gethsemani—eventually. In the meantime, he began planning trips to Mount Athos, Europe, and other places. In the event, Merton was accidentally electrocuted by a fan in Bangkok.

The Merton of the late books—several solid reflections on Zen Buddhism and Eastern thought—is a cheerful man (a characteristic many people who knew him personally have emphasized). For some time he had been wondering about the distinctiveness of the monastic life. The deflation of all pretense in

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Zen especially attracted him for its sanity, wisdom, and good humor. Merton had gone to Asia in search of something and had apparently found it in various holy places and meetings with Asian monastic figures. He was clearly trying to redefine what being a monk entailed. Unfortunately, his last lecture (delivered just hours before he died) invoked now dated figures like Herbert Marcuse and praised as "true monks" some young European and American activists he had met on the way to Asia. This account bears all the marks of the self-righteousness and confusion of roles that the Vietnam War and Cold War induced in many circles. Merton deserved better at the end.

Merton's true greatness lies in having engaged in person the whole range of challenges and trials of life in the late twentieth century and yet remaining essentially faithful to his Catholic inspiration. Many of those issues we still confront: poverty and war, the relationship of Eastern and Western thought, and especially how a deep religious life may be lived in contemporary conditions. As we near the end of the century, religion—even contemplative practices—have had a tremendous resurgence. Many of the paths religious people took during the 1960s are coming more and more to look like a dead end. But the attempt to bring a deeper spirituality to the public realm—to say nothing of recovering authentic spirituality—remains a burning necessity.

Merton is beyond doubt one of the great spiritual masters of our century. His personal turmoil and the misjudgments in his social thought notwithstanding, he is a forceful reminder that what may appear the most rarefied of contemplative speculations have powerful and concrete implications for the world. God dealt Thomas Merton a difficult hand. His greatness as a man lies not only in that he was able, more or less, to keep several different persons together in difficult times under the banner of "Thomas Merton," but that he provides an enduring witness to all of us much less gifted seekers who have to shore up our own fragmentary lives in quest for the "hidden wholeness." *Requiscat in pace.* FT

If God Is Calling Your Name

If God is calling your name,
a name that is common enough,
how would you know,
what could make you sure
it was you he called
and not some other who might answer first
before you could decide,
or just after you
and say he spoke before
you drowned him out
with your greediness, your
need to be the favorite,
the only one
whose name God knew
for sure?
Then
don't answer at all
with the chance
that you might hear:
"Oh no, not you;
I'm waiting for another,
the one who never volunteers."

Warren L. Molton

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Books In Review

The Man Who Loved Women and Democracy

WOMEN AND THE COMMON LIFE: LOVE, MARRIAGE, AND FEMINISM. By CHRISTOPHER LASCH. Edited by ELISABETH LASCH-QUINN. *Norton. 192 pp. $23.*

Reviewed by **Mary Ann Glendon**

HISTORIAN AND CULTURAL CRITIC Christopher Lasch occupied a peculiar niche in contemporary social thought. His books, especially *Haven in a Heartless World* (1977) and *The Culture of Narcissism* (1979), were widely reviewed, yet his name is better known than his ideas. (What must Lasch have thought when *Haven in a Heartless World,* with its heavily ironic title, was repeatedly labelled a sentimental tract on the family?) Fellow scholars cited him, but few actually grappled with his challenges to their reigning paradigms. And, except for a brief stint advising President Jimmy Carter, Lasch was never taken into the corridors of power. His critique of the nanny state made him useless to the liberal left; his jeremiads on consumer capitalism alienated the economic right; and his tirades against "elites" made him persona non grata to much of the knowledge class.

MARY ANN GLENDON *is the Learned Hand Professor of Law at Harvard University.*

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Unforgivably in the eyes of these latter, he was an unapologetic defender of the lower-middle-class moral traditions from which many knowledge workers of his generation had emerged and escaped. To make matters worse, he was a leading champion of the good sense of the citizenry as against the nostrums of bureaucrats and so-called experts.

In 1993 and 1994, while battling the cancer that claimed his life at the age of sixty-one, Lasch completed *The Revolt of the Elites and the Betrayal of Democracy,* and, with the help of his daughter, this collection of essays on women, love, the family, and feminism. Elisabeth Lasch-Quinn writes in her introduction that her father regarded these essays (all but one previously published) as steps in a longstanding search for connections between feminism and the modern ideals of intimacy and domesticity. Their chief value, however, may well lie in the way Lasch relates women's history to his lifelong concern with the conditions for democratic self-government.

Long before women's studies became a fashionable field unto itself, Lasch was writing about women's roles in history. Like Fernand Braudel and others who ventured into the long-neglected territory of the history of ordinary life, Lasch was a pioneer in connecting the history of everyday things to larger economic developments. But his own work was distinguished by a passionate interest in the lives of women and the firm conviction that neither cultural history nor women's history can be understood apart from one another. At a time when leading historians of the family were concentrating on the English and French aristocracy, Lasch focused on marriage and family life among ordinary Americans. His historical vantage point yielded fruitful insights into contemporary American life, which he presented in a highly readable series of books, articles, and review essays for the *New York Review of Books.*

The overarching concept that, for Lasch, links changes in women's roles and the family to the cultural history of the West in general is the rationalization of everyday life. Lasch-Quinn summarizes his thesis succinctly:

> Much of modern life . . . rests on the assumption that all realms of activity should come under intense scrutiny, that science and rationality can best lead to an understanding of human experience, and that only trained experts can direct the conduct of daily existence. The reordering of life according to such principles of rationalization resulted from the tendency of corporate capitalism and the modern liberal state to expand their power, which they accomplished by means of a bureaucratic structure and paternalistic ethos. The service professions, acting on behalf of the state, intruded into the private domain, helping to replace habit and custom with esoteric techniques for addressing everyday problems, causing a situation of dependence on elites that is antithetical to democracy.

THERE, IN A NUTSHELL, is the line of thinking that made Lasch such a blister to many liberals and conservatives: his condemnation of corporate and governmental power grabs, his attachment to a robust vision of

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democratic citizenship, and his conviction that the social work establishment, educators, therapists, and other semi-skilled technocrats had undermined the competence of the middle class, while subjecting the poor to "new controls sincerely disguised as benevolence."

Also central to Lasch's thought, and to these essays, is the belief that a vibrant civil society (the "common life" of his title) is both a prerequisite for, and a goal of, democracy. In the centerpiece of the collection, "The Sexual Division of Labor, the Decline of Civic Culture, and the Rise of the Suburbs," Lasch postulates that changes in women's roles were importantly linked to the decline of communities of memory and mutual aid.

The essay begins by challenging a standard historical narrative according to which industrialization forced middle-class women into the role of full-time housewives, a prison from which they were freed only by the glorious revolution of the 1960s. In reality, Lasch claims, the misnamed "traditional" household, where the wife is a full-time homemaker, is of much more recent date. It was "a mid-twentieth-century innovation," appearing on a broad scale only in connection with the rapid growth of suburbs after World War II.

Lasch supports his periodization by reminding us that the period from 1890 to 1920 was a time of intense participation by middle-class women in civic life. Homemakers and single women alike devoted much of their time and energies to charitable activities, religious groups, and reform movements, from the township and village level to the state and national arenas. All that is well known, so why does the myth persist that most women were isolated in the home once their husbands became wage earners? Lasch plausibly speculates that many historians overlooked "women's contribution to an intermediate realm of civic culture that belongs neither to the family nor the market" because of a mind-set in which the only work that counts is work for pay.

The era of women's busy and important civic service, however, wound down as domestic helpers grew scarce, and as professional social workers and administrators took over many of the activities that had previously been controlled by unpaid volunteers.

It is Lasch's contention that when one takes all this civic activity into account, and adds the wage work of lower-class women, one has to move the appearance of full-time homemaking on a broad scale from the late nineteenth century to the post-World War II period. To my mind, however, Lasch's emphasis on community service misses the importance of the earlier shift from the interdependent family farm or shop to the wage-earner's household where women and children became much more dependent economically on the husband-father than he was on them. That momentous transition had at least as much influence on the dynamics of family life and the shape of twentieth-century feminism as the later move to the suburbs. Lasch is certainly correct, though, that the homemaker-breadwinner household was far from being "traditional." Its rise to predominance was historically unprecedented.

Lasch is also right to emphasize that women's roles did change significantly with the exodus to the suburbs in the 1940s and 1950s. The small, child-raising family became more inward-turning, and the bonds between husband and wife and parent and child were expected to bear more emotional weight. Moreover, when upwardly mobile men and women shook the dust of villages and urban neighborhoods from their feet, they left behind the civic cultures that had flourished in such places, along with the old informal support systems among relatives and neighbors that everyone had taken for granted. The homemaker was far more on her own in the domestic sphere than she had ever been—and far more dependent on her husband.

Of course, as Lasch points out, "privacy" was part of the appeal of the suburb. Along with advice comes nosiness; material and emotional support from neighbors and relatives entails expectations of reciprocity. The suburb offered an escape from external obligations, interference, and constraints:

> [Suburbs] were designed to exclude everything not subject to choice—the job, the extended family, the enforced sociability of the city streets. Americans hoped to put all that behind them when they headed for the seclusion of the suburbs, where they were accountable it seemed to no one.

Ironically, just when women found themselves with unprecedented amounts of time for, and control over, the internal affairs of the household, they began to feel less competent in child-raising and other tasks which their predecessors from the beginning of time had handled with aplomb. The shortage of informal sources of advice and support

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made itself felt. Barely having emerged from older forms of subordination, middle-class women thus fell into "a new kind of dependence, the dependence of the consumer on the market, and on the providers of expert services, not only for the satisfaction of their needs but for the very definition of their needs." In this way, Lasch connects women's history to the erosion of the conditions for democratic self-government.

Lasch finds support in Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) for his contention that the loss of common life and the decline in women's civic roles fueled the frustration that gave rise to the feminism of the 1960s. Friedan's book was, he points out, chiefly addressed to concerns of educated, suburban women. And the feminism of such women, he argues, was bedevilled from the start by their dependence on "experts"—doctors, counsellors, educators, child-raising specialists.

Respecting women too much to see them as passively carried along on the wave of events, Lasch insists that women themselves bear a share of the responsibility for the replacement of patriarchal authority with new forms of social discipline. While homemakers were ceding power in their own domains to experts, the feminist revolution, he charges, was "hijacked by new economic and social elites."

This is consistent with Elizabeth Fox-Genovese's account of how official feminism developed the same disrespect for unpaid work that Lasch criticizes in family historians. The feminist movement's chief prescription for women's emancipation was market work. Official feminism embraced a male model for advancement in which family responsibilities were subordinated to the demands of the world of work. As Betty Friedan concedes in the June 3, 1996 issue of the *New Yorker*, feminists thus distanced themselves from the concerns of the great majority of women—who were and are trying to juggle work and family life under difficult circumstances.

What Lasch adds to this picture is that married women's large-scale entry into the workplace coincided with the shift to an economy that "depended on work that had no other object than to keep people at work and thus to sustain the national capacity to consume, which in turn sustained production, which sustained . . . an approximation of full employment—all without reference to the intrinsic quality of the goods and services produced or the intrinsic satisfaction of the work that went into them." Under these circumstances, Friedan's 1963 exhortation to middle-class women to find work offering "initiative, leadership, and responsibility" began to sound like advising Biafrans to adopt a more nutritious diet.

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perpetuates false consciousness, male domination, and female dependency, Lasch observes:

> [Religion] is a challenge to self-pity and despair, temptations common to all of us, but especially to those born into the wrong social class. . . . Submission to God makes people less submissive in everyday life. It makes them less fearful but also less bitter and resentful, less inclined to make excuses for themselves. Modern social movements, on the other hand, tend to rely on resentment. . . . They distrust any understanding that would seem to "blame the victim." In this way they discourage the assumption of personal responsibility.

Unlike more timid male academics, Lasch does not hesitate to offer his thoughts concerning a better approach to women's issues. A feminism "worthy of the name," he says, would seek to remodel the workplace around the needs of the family, rather than acquiesce in the opposite situation; it would cease disparaging unpaid work; and, above all, it would "insist that people need self-respecting, honorable callings."

This concern with the human need for decent, useful work is a recurrent theme in Lasch's later writings. In some respects, his thoughts are reminiscent of Freud's apostrophe to work in *Civilization and Its Discontents*. Like Freud, Lasch seems to write from the very core of his being on this subject. "The only escape from the polarity of egoism and altruism," he says, "lies in the selflessness experienced by those who lose themselves in their work, in the effort to master a craft or a body of knowledge, or in the acceptance of a formidable challenge that calls on all their resources." Lasch describes those fortunate enough to have such work as "blissfully self-forgetful."

But while Freud regarded such satisfactions as beyond the scope and ken of mere common folk, Lasch railed against a social order where opportunities for useful work are widely unavailable. His writing on this subject has many affinities in substance, though not in tone, with the social encyclicals of John Paul II, who consistently insists on the importance of the noneconomic aspects of work, the dignity of unpaid labor, and the priority of human over economic values.

From glimpses provided in his daughter's introduction, it seems that Lasch himself found "blissful self-forgetfulness" in his work up to the very end of his life. Lasch-Quinn writes:

> Increasingly we worked every possible hour of the day, my father making an adjusted routine according to each stage of his illness. The sweatshop's compulsion, though, was absent. Instead there was the strangest exhilaration. This was confusing; we seemed to be so content, even joyful at times, yet my father was dying. Somehow, between frightening medical emergencies and worries, my parents created a space of peace and calm. That living room became for me a haven. . . . Sometimes it seemed almost sacred.

Lasch may not have been a prophet in his own land, but he seems to have been happier than prophets of antiquity. He was blessed with a joyous family life, a deeply satisfying vocation, and a sober sense of hope that he always carefully distinguished from optimism.

These essays are among the best contemporary writing in their field, not only because their author was a fine historian, but because he was a man who loved women. He loved them enough to cherish the details of their everyday lives, to listen to their voices past and present, and to believe that they themselves can shift the probabilities toward a different and better future.

Getting Over the End of the World

Omens of Millennium: The Gnosis of Angels, Dreams, and Resurrection. By Harold Bloom. *Riverhead Books/Putnam. 255 pp. $24.95.*

***Reviewed by* John J. Reilly**

Harold Bloom, perhaps, needs no introduction. A professor at both Yale and New York University, he is

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as famous a literary critic as we have in America, and in recent years he has taken an interest in religious questions in general and American religion in particular. This book, a personal spiritual meditation, has something of the appeal of G. K. Chesterton's historical works: the author relies on a modest selection of books with which many of his readers are probably familiar, so the argument is not intimidating. Reading it, you will learn a great deal about Sufism, Kabbalah, and those aspects of popular culture that seem to be influenced by the impending turn of the millennium. You will, however, learn less about millennial anticipation than you might have hoped. The lack is not an oversight: apocalypse is a kind of spirituality that holds little appeal for Bloom. While this preference is of course his privilege, it does mean that his understanding of the spiritual state of today's millennial America has a major blind spot.

Bloom's subject is his experience of "gnosis," the secret knowledge that is at once self-knowledge and cosmic revelation. Bloom has much to say about "Gnosticism" properly so-called, which was the religion of heretical Christians and Jews in the early centuries of the Christian era. He is also concerned with contemporary popular spiritual enthusiasms. We hear a lot about the fascination with angels, dreams, near-death experiences, and intimations of the end of the age that take up so much shelf-space in bookstores these days. Bloom is at pains to show that these sentimental phenomena in fact are part of a long Gnostic tradition that has engaged some of the finest minds of every age.

This aspect of the book is perhaps something of a patriotic exercise, since Bloom reached the conclusion in his study *The American Religion* that America is a fundamentally Gnostic country whose most characteristic religious product is the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Bloom's conclusions struck many people familiar with the professed theologies of America's major denominations as a trifle eccentric, but he was scarcely the first commentator to claim that the people in the pews actually believe something quite different from what their ministers learned at the seminary.

Bloom is perfectly justified in complaining that the angels in particular have been shamefully misrepresented in America today. In the popular literature of angels, they appear as a species of superhero. They are friendly folks just like you and me, except they are gifted with ex-

JOHN J. REILLY *is a member of the Center for Millennial Studies, based at Boston University.*

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traordinary powers to make themselves helpful, especially to people in life-threatening situations. Angels in art have been as cute as puppies for so long that the popular mind has wholly lost contact with the terrifying entities of Ezekiel's vision. Bloom seeks to reacquaint us with these images, particularly as they have survived in Kabbalah and Sufi speculation. He is much concerned with Metatron, the Angel of America, variously thought to be the Enoch of Genesis and the secret soul of the Mormon prophet Joseph Smith.

WHILE *Omens of Millennium* is not without its entertaining aspects for people who do not regularly follow New Age phenomena, Bloom does seek to promote a serious spiritual agenda. The central insight of gnosis, according to its major scholar, Hans Jonas, is the alienation of man from this world. We are strangers to both matter and history. Bloom despairs of theodicy. Considered with an objective secular eye, the world is at best a theater of the absurd and at worst a torture chamber. If there is a god responsible for this world, then that god is a monster or a fool. And in fact, for just shy of two millennia, Gnostics of various persuasions have said that the god of conventional religion was just such an incompetent creator. The consolation of gnosis is that there is a perfect reality beyond the reality of the senses, and a God unsullied by the creation of the world we know. The fiery angels, the prophetic dreams, the visions of an afterlife that make up much of the occult corpus are images of that true reality. They move in a middle realm, connecting the temporal and the eternal, ready to guide those human beings desperate enough to seek the secret knowledge that gives mastery over them.

The people take these images literally. They believe they will not die, or that the resurrection is an event that will take place in the future. They believe that spiritual entities wholly distinct from themselves love them and care for them. They wait, sometimes with anxiety and sometimes with hope, for the transformation of this world. The Gnostic elite, in contrast, know that these things are symbols. They understand that there is something in themselves that was never created, and so can never die. They can learn to use the images of the mid-world to approach these fundamental things, but without investing them with an independent reality. They need neither hope nor faith: they know, and their salvation is already achieved.

All of this sounds wonderfully austere. It allows for an aesthetic spirituality that avoids the twin perils of crude materialism and vulgar supernaturalism. The problem with Bloom's particular take on Gnosti-

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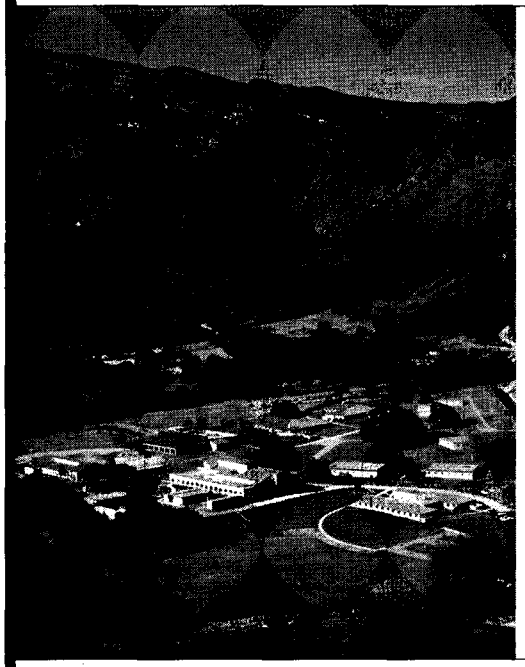

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cism, however, is that it is not only alien to sentimental popular religion, it is also alien to the esoteric forms gnosis has taken throughout history.

Bloom believes that Gnosticism appears when apocalypticism fails. This is what he believes happened in Judaism around the time of Jesus. By that point, Palestine had been bubbling with literal millenarianism for two centuries. The dead would shortly rise, the poor would soon be comforted, and the wicked would be infallibly punished. It was the stubborn refusal of these things to happen that prompted the strong spirits of those days to consider whether they may not have been looking for these things on the wrong level of reality. Apocalypse properly understood is not prophecy, but an assessment that put this world in its place. More important, it pointed to the greater reality that lay eternally beyond the world. Bloom hints that this process is in fact the explanation for Christianity itself, since he suspects that Jesus himself was a Gnostic whose subtle teachings were grossly misinterpreted by the irascible apostle Paul.

THE SHORT ANSWER to this view is that apocalypse and gnosis usually go together. It is common in religious systems for eschatology to be expressed on both the personal and the universal level. In other words, the fate of the world and the fate of individual human souls tend to follow parallel patterns, and Gnostic theology is no different. Manicheanism, for instance, had a particularly elaborate cosmology describing how the divine substance was trapped in the world of matter, forming the secret core of human souls. The hope Manicheanism offered was that someday this divine essence will all finally be released in a terminal conflagration. Details vary among Gnostic systems, but they generally hold that the creation of the world shattered God. History and the world will end when the fragments are reassembled. Often this takes the form of the reintegration of the Primal Adam, the cosmic giant whose fragments are our souls. While this aspect of gnosis can also be taken metaphorically, the fact is that Gnostic millenarianism has not been at all rare in history.

Sufi-influenced Islamic rulers, from the Old Man of the Mountain to the last Shah of Iran, have a long tradition of ascribing eschatological significance to their reigns. Kabbalah has an explosive messianic tradition that has strongly influenced Jewish history more than once. In Christian Europe, the Heresy of the Free Spirit in the thirteenth century offered Gnostic illumination to the educated of the West in a package that came with the hope of an imminent new age of the spirit. As Bloom knows, the Renaissance and early modern eras were rife with hermeticists like Giordano Bruno who divided their time between political intrigue and their own occult apotheosis. The gentlemanly lodge-politics of the pre-revolutionary eighteenth century made a firm connection between hermetic theory and the hope of revolution (as well as providing endless entertainment for conspiracy buffs who think that secret societies like the Rosicruceans and the Bavarian Illuminati are somehow immortal). Whatever else can be said about gnosis, it is clearly not hostile to apocalyptic thinking. In the light of this history, it is hard to accept Bloom's complacent assertion that gnosis bears no guilt because it has never been in power. It has frequently been in power, though rarely under its own name. There is even a good argument to be made that the Nazi regime was fundamentally Gnostic.

There is, in fact, a logical connection between gnosis and apocalypticism. Apocalypses come in various flavors. Some are hopeful, some are fearful, some are actually conservative. There is also an apocalypse of loathing, of contempt, and hatred for the world and its history. We can clearly see such a mood in societies that nearly destroy themselves, such as Pol Pot's Cambodia, but it has also informed less extreme revolutions and upheavals throughout history. Gnosis has much in common

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with this mood. Gnostics at best seek to be reconciled with the world. Some seek to purify themselves of it. Others look forward to its destruction in a grossly literal fashion. More than a few, it seems, have been willing to help the process along.

Bloom mentions at one point that C. S. Lewis' *Mere Christianity* is one of his least favorite books. We may be forgiven for wondering whether this antipathy arises because, as even a cursory acquaintance with Lewis' writings indicates, he was a Gnostic who eventually grew out of it. As St. Augustine's *Confessions* illustrates, gnosis may be a stage in spiritual maturity, but it has not been the final destination for many of the finest spirits. Bloom seems to think that his version of gnosis has a great future in the next century, after people tire of their current millennial enthusiasms. Perhaps some form of spirituality has a great future, but it is unlikely to be the one he has in mind.

Exultant Abnegation

Forbidden Knowledge: From Prometheus to Pornography. By Roger Shattuck. *St. Martin's. 369 pp. $26.95.*

Reviewed by **Matthew Scully**

As the title suggests, this book ventures into some fairly dangerous territory. Author Roger Shattuck has even posted "Warnings to the Reader," once at the beginning and again when we come to his bracing chapters on pornography and the Marquis de Sade. I confess to hesitating a few moments myself, for just the reasons he analyzes throughout *Forbidden Knowledge.*

There is, Shattuck argues, an age-old impulse to explore and eyeball things best ignored—an impulse that in our own day has utterly slipped its leash. Our culture, he believes, is given over to unbridled curiosity and a constant hankering for the forbidden. Teams of genetic engineers rush to crack our genetic code, with little thought to practical consequences. Artists and writers are celebrated (and often bankrolled, he might have added) merely for being "original," "shocking," or "experimental"—the more shocking the experiment the more original the art. An $8 billion pornography industry operates with no restrictions to speak of, with the occasional Jeffrey Dahmer or Ted Bundy turning up to show where this is leading. Little by little, says Shattuck, we have lost any sense of self-restraint, limit, or mystery—with often deadly results.

The book makes the case for "satiable curiosity" (a phrase Shattuck borrows from Kipling's *Just-So Stories*). It's a call for regaining a sense of our own reach, though like all such calls, it doesn't really offer much in the way of practical advice. Shattuck, a professor of language and literature at Boston University, seems doubtful himself at the outset. "Are there," he begins, "things we should not know? Can anyone or any institution, in this culture of unfettered enterprise and growth, seriously propose limits on knowledge? Have we lost the capacity to perceive and honor the moral dimensions of such questions?"

About two-thirds of the book follows this theme in literature, the Bible, and old myths. In Prometheus, says Shattuck, we have the prototype of the modern quest for power, knowledge, experience, and in general things that are not ours to have. But the closer we get to our own day, Shattuck observes, the more noble and heroic Prometheus appears in retellings of the tale such as Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound.* The original moral of Hesiod's story was precisely that we're all better off bound—else we wind up with the curiosity of Pandora, the temptress sent by Zeus to Prometheus' brother after the theft of fire. Neglecting that part of the story, we "avoid dealing with the full consequences to mankind of the knowledge Prometheus brings. . . .

Matthew Scully, *a writer living in Virginia, has been a speechwriter for former Pennsylvania Governor Robert Casey and presidential candidate Robert Dole.*

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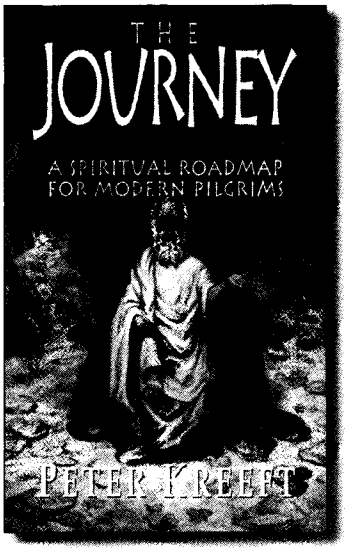

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We may not like the full myth, but we are distorting it by cutting it in two."

He makes similar points about Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein,* noting for example that "the Frankenstein monster" is not the monster himself but the doctor who presumed to enact such a project. He examines the character of Dr. Faust, who in successive versions (culminating in Goethe's *Faust*) also becomes a more heroic and sympathetic figure. We're a little like Faust ourselves, Shattuck writes. In that story of a soul's deal with the devil we find "one of the great dramatic situations afflicting and driving human beings in the modern world. We strive without knowing adequately what we are striving for and we believe our thirst for knowledge and experience is protected in high places."

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IN HIS DISCUSSION of Milton's *Paradise Lost,* Shattuck dismisses Elaine Pagels' *Adam, Eve & the Serpent* and Harold Bloom's trendy *The Book of J,* which treat the story of the fall as "archaic" and challenge the very assumption of malevolence in the serpent. Pagels, he writes, "cannot comprehend that, in addition to maintaining individual free choice, we need to attend to what everyday experiences as well as the enduring myths imply about a positive force of evil in history and in ourselves, a force ready to tempt, to corrupt, to infect."

Shattuck's treatment of Camus' *The Stranger* incorporates comments from students in the author's course in comparative literature. Meursault, the murderer who is the novel's protagonist, is, says Shattuck, "self-absorbed rather than self-conscious." He is the modern anti-hero, feeling misunderstood, apart, defiant to the end against any law or reproach beyond his own desires. Yet in their reactions to the story, Shattuck's students tended to identify with Meursault, reflecting, Shattuck writes, "a grave misreading leading to moral myopia." In most of the students' papers, "the basic fact of the murder is discounted, not mentioned, virtually overlooked."

Then there's the Marquis de Sade, our "most extreme case of forbidden writing." For two centuries, Shattuck writes, Sade lay buried in our cultural consciousness; among scholars his books had the status of "a rare archeological site with an ancient curse to protect it." Today we find Sade studied in college courses, available in paperback, and even honored on stage in a production of his masterpiece of mayhem, *The 120 Days of Sodom.*

Shattuck traces each step in the Sade "rehabilitation." His analysis of the reasons offered for studying Sade (running along the familiar lines of needing to "confront" Sade's "message," the better to "understand" him) is devastating. He attributes the rehabilitation of Sade to "an eerie post-Nietzschean death wish in the twentieth century. That death wish seeks absolute liberation, knowing that it will lead to absolute destruction—physical, moral, and spiritual. For some, apocalypse exerts a strong attraction."

Still more compelling is the chapter in which Shattuck considers how the Sade revival is playing out beyond classrooms and French academies. He examines the cases of Ted Bundy and the English "moors murderers" of the 1960s—both cases revealing the spell of pornography. Such cases, he believes, prove that Sade's "profusely illustrated moral nihilism has entered our cultural bloodstream at the highest intellectual and at the lowest criminal levels."

Should we therefore "burn Sade"? Shattuck wonders. He answers no, likening the situation to medical laboratories which "preserve the most virulent strains of fatal diseases for educational or research purposes." He may be right, though reading his excerpts from Sade one can't help but reflect that French authorities could have spared us a lot of trouble by handling matters on site. Today we're stuck with Sade and his influence, Shattuck argues, but this does not absolve the intellectual and artistic classes from throwing the laboratory doors wide open in the name of tolerance or free expression. Shattuck quotes C. S. Lewis on the point: "When poisons become fashionable, they do not cease to kill." And, Shattuck believes, when the victims of sex crimes start turning up, the academic followers in Sade's path are not free from blame.

A BRIEF RESPITE from these dark themes comes in a chapter called "The Pleasures of Abstinence." Shat-

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tuck is a great admirer of Emily Dickenson and the lesser known Madame de La Fayette from the late 1600s. They serve here to illuminate what he calls, quoting Milton, being "lowly wise." The writings of both convey a preference for revelation over revelry, modesty over hubris, "the rewards of temperance and abstinence over those of indulgence and hedonism." What today would be taken for prudery in both, observes Shattuck, is actually self-abnegation and spiritual imagination. Neither woman "shrinks from the implied paradox: that to acknowledge a limit on experience may extend our freedom to be ourselves." (Shattuck adds, "I cannot readily cite a novel, poem, or play . . . that casts a man in the role of exultant abnegation," leaving the reader to wonder what he would make of Cyrano, Sidney Carton in *A Tale of Two Cities*, or for that matter Quasimodo.)

Shattuck's meditations on the rush of science today are equally measured and subtle. He mentions that as a soldier in World War II almost certainly headed for an invasion of Japan, he probably would not be around today but for the atom bomb. But he still thinks of the Manhattan Project as the beginning of something sinister (J. Robert Oppenheimer was "our modern Prometheus in a fedora"). The good that comes from technology cannot, he believes, be palmed off as our all-purpose excuse for scientific hubris. We walk along "an increasingly slippery slope little affected by good intentions and individual twinges of conscience."

Having examined genetic engineering at some length, he settles upon the warning that science "is neither a sin nor a grail." He urges that we keep a closer eye on such benevolent-sounding endeavors as the Human Genome Project—which are often more interested in genomes and the like than in humans. He tells the story of a group of scientists at work on gene alteration. Attending a conference on the project, they display no doubts, qualms, or hesitation about their work until they hear from a lawyer briefing them on the possibilities of their own legal liability should things go wrong. Suddenly a silence falls over the room.

Nothing else, none of the wicked possibilities involved in "editing our genetic text," seems to trouble them much, says Shattuck. To his credit he does not shy from comparing this to Nazi experiments in eugenics. And whatever good motives we may find driving these projects won't matter if they lead—as they already are leading—to such wholesale practices as selective birth.

C. S. LEWIS once observed that there is no such thing as "power over technology": Technology is always a power wielded by some human beings over other human beings—invariably the weak, unwanted, unseen, or unborn. Shattuck is right that ultimately only government can lay down the law on such things as the Genome Project and fetal research. But the problem runs deeper, since "government" here can usually be read as "the courts," and our courts have not proven very trustworthy. One could hardly describe a typical federal judge as animated by "an attitude of reverence and wonder" in the face of complex ethical questions.

Shattuck mentions John Paul II's own warnings on these matters once, and maybe a little more was due to the person who has spoken out more than any other against the evils Shattuck fears. The word "abortion" appears just once, though it's hard to think of anything that bears out his own warnings more vividly. One regrets that in his discussion of eugenics he didn't bring in Margaret Sanger for a well-deserved thrashing. But perhaps Shattuck thought more on that general score would invite reviewers to brush off the book as a pro-life tract—and perhaps he was right.

In all, *Forbidden Knowledge* is a powerful book, and its greatest strength is Shattuck's own mild voice. "Lowly wise" seems a pretty fair description of the author. Despite the sickly and often unsavory

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subject matter, there is not an overwrought or injudicious sentence in the book. Shattuck has an air of simplicity and good will we don't find much anymore among academics. I'm not sure such voices still carry very far in the culture he describes. But if over time things slowly turn around, we'll have people like him, the quiet ones, to thank for it.

Whig History Revisited

THE RELIGIOUS ORIGINS OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION: FROM CALVIN TO THE CIVIL CONSTITUTION, 1560-1791. DALE K. VAN KLEY. *Yale University Press. 390 pp. $35.*

Reviewed by **Norman Ravitch**

ONCE UPON A TIME, as one story goes, men and women rose up in defiance against religious superstition and oppression to split the thousand-year tyranny of Catholic Christendom. They succeeded in ending Catholic domination in much of northern Europe and provided the foundation for a remarkable growth of free thought, free economic activity, political democracy, and modernization. Britain and Holland were the first beneficiaries of these developments, having led the way in the more radical stage of the Protestant Reformation. But through colonization, especially in America, freedom in church, state, economy, and personal life spread all over the globe.

Once upon a time, as another story goes, people rose up in rebellion against God and His Church, precipitating the Protestant Reformation in which apostolic religious truth gave way to political calculation, economic greed, sinful individualism, and other works of the Antichrist. Much of Europe lost the true faith, but—thanks to divine guidance of the Counter-Reformation—the losses to the Catholic Church in Europe were more than compensated for by the spread of the faith to the Americas and to parts even more distant. The spirit of impiety, individualism, and rebellion took many forms both religious and secular. The Protestant Reformation was the ultimate cause of political revolution—from the French Revolution of 1789 to the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the victory of Bolshevism. Satan used Protestantism to attack belief in traditional Christianity, and Protestantism's children to attack all belief in God.

The problem is, of course, that both these stories are fairy tales, Voltaire's "pack of tricks we play on the dead." And in a curious way, they are the same fairy tale, both seeking to explain the growth of unbelief, disobedience, and freedom after these had been held in check for a millennium by God's Holy Church. Protestant, liberal, and Anglo-American historians repeated without challenge the heroic defense of freedom by Lutheran, Calvinist, and Anglican reformers, by Dutch freedom fighters against Spanish cruelty and tyranny, and by intellectual opponents of religious obscurantism in the eighteenth century. Here is essentially the Whig Interpretation of History. In the aftermath of the French Revolution conservatives trotted out theories about the ultimately Protestant origins of political revolt: disobedience towards God had led in short order to disobedience towards all constituted authority, with the French Revolution finally attempting and the Bolshevik Revolution finally achieving the abolition of Christianity. Here is the analysis and prophecy of Pope Pius IX's *Syllabus of Errors.* Liberal and ultra-conservative theory agreed essentially about the course of modern life and thought. Their approval or disapproval alone distinguished their otherwise paral-

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lel interpretations of the course of modern history since the Renaissance, for the liberals ascribed all virtue to liberal Christianity and all vice to authoritarian Catholicism while their ultra-conservative colleagues in debate simply reversed the order. For both, religion was the driving force of history.

DALE VAN KLEY's new book, *The Religious Origins of the French Revolution,* seeks to revive a sort of Whiggish interpretation of the French Revolution as the struggle for freedom against sacral monarchy, with much of the ideological discourse of the revolutionaries deriving from little expected religious controversies—beginning with the rise and fall of Calvinism in Catholic France, continuing through the struggles over theological Jansenism, and ending in the political struggles of the French high courts of justice, the *parlements,* with the administrative monarchy of the eighteenth century. Where historians ever since 1789 have sought the causes of the French Revolution in the philosophy of the Enlightenment or in the rise of the bourgeoisie against feudal-aristocratic society and monarchy, Van Kley believes the time is right for a renewed look at the more remote but more profound influence of the struggle between rival Christian notions of the good society. In simpler terms, although nothing in this volume is simple, the struggle between sacral monarchy (as favored by the ultra-montanist Catholicism of the Jesuits) and a more contractual political order (as defended by the Jansenists) is the real history of the period between 1560 and the French Revolution.

No one would doubt that before the privatization of religion, which is the chief sign of secularization, religion pervaded the entire world of early modern Europeans and there were religious roots to everything as there were nonreligious entanglements in everything deemed religious. Before the "disenchantment of the world," something for which Protestants generally and Calvinists most especially can be credited or blamed, the presence of the divine in human affairs was everywhere acknowledged, however much some might deplore the more "superstitious" responses to it.

Thus, in the story of the growth of monarchic absolutism in France, religion was central and political discourse and action were always rooted in religious doctrine and belief. The strife caused by the spread of Calvinism, the attempt of the monarchy to create a royal religion which could not be used to undermine monarchic authority, and the resistance to a coercive and intolerant state all created a place for religious discussion about tyrannicide, contract theory, divine right, and religious tolerance. As the divine right monarchy came increasingly in the eighteenth century to defend its positions on the grounds of administrative reason and enlightened reform, the discourse of those resisting

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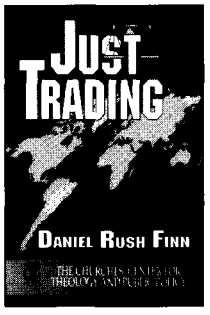

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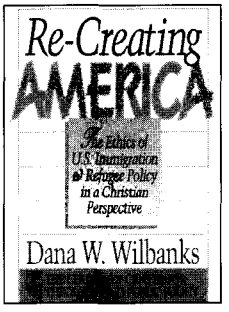

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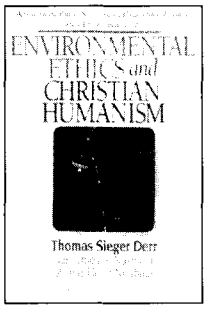

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its rule also relied less on traditional religious appeals and more on secular ones, but the religious roots of all sides of the political and social debate were only obscured, never severed. Thus far, no one can differ with Van Kley.

Van Kley has founded his academic career on the discovery or rediscovery of the importance of disputes once dismissed as too traditional to be relevant. For this he has long deserved thanks and has amply received it. But as he extends his reach, he seems to lose control of his legitimate thesis. His first work, *The Jansenists and the Expulsion of the Jesuits from France, 1757-1765* (1975), convincingly identified the chief actors in that drama as a small group of Jansenists in the Gallican *parlements* and not the anticlerical *philosophes* of the Enlightenment. His second book, *The Damiens Affair and the Unraveling of the Ancien Regime, 1750-1770* (1984), tried to use the bungled attempt by Damiens to assassinate Louis XV to demonstrate the decline of reverence for the sacral monarchy of the Bourbons, a less successful attempt to extend his general thesis about the role of religious ideas.

AND WITH THIS book, Van Kley has attempted to drive his insights all the way to the causes of the French Revolution. He seems fixated on the Jansenists as the chief force behind opposition to the French monarchy, at times exaggerating their importance while at other times deploring their only partial resemblance to Calvinists. Van Kley seems to deplore those features of Jansenism that were truly Catholic and to prefer a more radically Calvinist break with Catholic discourse and worship. He even regrets the complicating influence of a Pascal who was much too apolitical and too Catholic for revolutionary purposes.

Like Edgar Quinet, the nineteenth-century liberal French historian, Van Kley really wishes that France had become Protestant in the sixteenth century. It could thus have joined the modern, liberal world with less pain, less conflict, and less ambiguity. This may be fine for Protestants who believe that Catholicism simply perpetuates feudal ideas and superstitious belief, but it is not a very helpful point of view when trying to understand the French with sympathy. One result is that Van Kley's attitude towards the Jesuits necessarily displays both prejudice and misinformation. Where he views the Jesuits as the chief ideologues of sacral monarchy and oppression, historians like J. N. Figgis find in the Jesuits plausible friends of liberty and progress. The fourth Jesuit vow to the Pope, for instance, involved not absolute obedience to his every whim but rather a promise to obey any missionary venture he might require *in partibus infidelium*. Such misunderstandings and biases raise the question of whether an author so unsympathetic to Catholicism should be writing the history of what is, after all, a Catholic nation.

The Religious Origins of the French Revolution can enlighten those willing to grapple with a mass of tough material, but it will not convince many.

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The Heart of the Church

MARY THROUGH THE CENTURIES: HER PLACE IN THE HISTORY OF CULTURE. By JAROSLAV PELIKAN. *Yale University Press. 267 pp. $25.*

***Reviewed by* Edward T. Oakes**

IN 1938 a famous Jewish novelist had to flee his native Austria after its annexation by Nazi Germany. Because of his poor health the journey was slow going, and in 1940 he and his wife found themselves more or less

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trapped in a small town called Lourdes in Vichy France. Because the Pétain government was scarcely less zealous in deporting Jews than were the Germans and Austrians, he desperately needed to get a safe-conduct pass before Vichy's suspicious bureaucrats caught on to the real reason for the urgency of his flight.

While anxiously waiting for the slip of paper that would mean the difference between life and death, he began to read the records of the apparitions of Our Lady of Lourdes to a peasant girl of the area named Bernadette Soubirous. Intense and careful study convinced him of the authenticity of these apparitions with their attendant healing miracles; and so, in the very grotto where in 1858 Our Lady first revealed herself as the Immaculate Conception to fourteen-year-old Bernadette, he made a vow to the Blessed Virgin that if he and his wife escaped to America, he would write his next novel about the miracles and apparitions at Lourdes.

The novelist's name was Franz Werfel, and the novel he wrote when he finally made it to America was the immensely successful *Song of Bernadette*, which he also helped to transform into the Academy Award-winning film of the same name.

JAROSLAV PELIKAN does not cite this story, but it is one of the few that go unmentioned in *Mary Through the Centuries*, a fascinating account of the intense popularity of, and the phenomenally varied devotion to, the woman whom her cousin Elizabeth called "the Mother of my Redeemer." And for all who have taken Jesus for their Redeemer she has become their Mother as well. As Pelikan makes clear in his Introduction, the twentieth century has witnessed no diminution of her popularity. In fact, quite the contrary, as the runaway success of the Werfel novel proves, or—to cite just some of the evidence Pelikan adduces—the acclaim of Catholics the world over when Pius XII infallibly declared Mary to have been assumed body and soul into heaven, or the fact (which was new to me) that on May 13, 1946, 700,000 pilgrims, almost a tenth of the population of Portugal, gathered at Fatima in honor of Mary as Queen of Peace to thank her at the end of World War II.

Equally striking about Mary's popularity and the intensity of the faithful's devotion to her is how noticeably lay-driven it is. The novelist Emile Zola once sneered that this was due to the manipulative power of the clergy over the "invincible ignorance of the unenlightened masses," but Pelikan rightly insists that this simply is not so. On the contrary, he says, official reaction at all levels has never been instantly enthusiastic, but has always insisted, at least in modern times, in approaching claims of Marian apparitions with rigor and caution.

And when that approval comes—only ten times by Pelikan's count—it always has something almost reluctant and compelled about it. Ecclesiastical recognition is nearly always a later concession based on a groundswell of prior approval by the laity. It is peasants and humble people of low estate to whom Mary appears and who so readily take up her cause. It seems apt, since Mary was the one in salvation history who exalted her Lord precisely for "putting down the mighty from their thrones and exalting those of low degree."

Nonetheless, and I say this despite the somewhat misleading subtitle, this book is not primarily about Mary's relationship with the "culture," and still less with the simple faithful who are Mary's true devotees. Rather, it deals almost entirely, except for a paragraph at the end of each chapter on a painting or icon chosen as the frontispiece for that chapter, with her place and role in the development of *doctrine*. However, this book is far from being a technical theological treatise, and so it does to that extent deliver on its title's promise, for it keeps its eye resolutely on the laity's role in that de-

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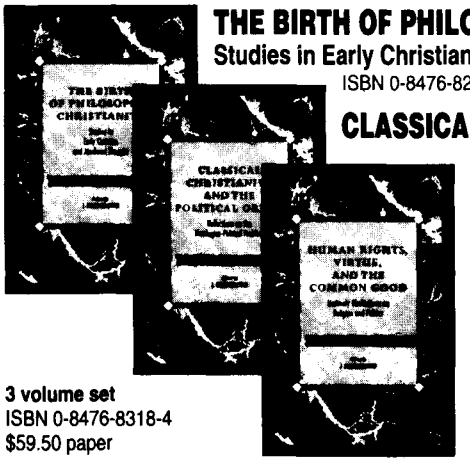

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velopment. Moreover, the author wears his learning lightly: each chapter reads like a fairly short, smoothly written magazine article, and only those readers who insist on looking up the endnote references will realize the staggering erudition that has gone into the writing of this book.

True to his stated purpose, Pelikan insists that Mary's role has been crucial to the Church's cultural mission, broadly defined. In one of the most remarkable passages of the book he says:

> There is good reason to believe that neither the intellectual defense of Christian revelation by the apologetic enterprise in nineteenth-century Roman Catholic theology, including the revival of Thomistic philosophical apologetics, nor the political defense of the institutional church and its prerogatives against the anticlericalism of that time was as effective a campaign, particularly among the common people, as the one that the Virgin Mary waged. For it has been well said that "Rome is the head of the Church but Lourdes is its heart."

THAT IS A REMARKABLE affirmation, coming as it does from America's premier Lutheran historian of dogma. Indeed, the attentive reader can occasionally pick up a certain undertone of impatience with either a Protestant refusal to countenance a development of dogma regarding Mary (even among Protestant churches that generally have no difficulty with developments enshrined in the decrees of Nicea, Ephesus, and Chalcedon) or with a feminist reductionist criticism of Mary as the ideal of humility and obedience for women.

Regarding the first, Pelikan shows that *every* Marian dogma underwent the development it did because some other doctrine crucial to revelation was at stake, and this is true even of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, which, Pelikan carefully explains, preserves Mary's assent to the Incarnation as itself entirely the product of God's grace and yet one which was—as his chapter on the Annunciation makes clear—of her own free will. He cites the early Church Father Irenaeus, who describes this paradox wonderfully: "Just as Eve was led astray by the word of an angel, . . . so Mary by an angelic communication received the glad tidings that she would be the bearer of God. . . . And if the former disobeyed God, yet the latter was persuaded to be obedient to God." The renowned conflict between grace and free will is best resolved here.

And regarding the second, it is this very juxtaposition of Eve and Mary that so often gets lost in feminist polemic against the portrayal of both Eve and Mary in the Bible, for Eve's susceptibility to temptation was highlighted precisely to bring out Mary's freedom to obey God—both engraced and yet calling upon all her active strength, as the few scenes of her in the Gospels during Jesus' earthly ministry so amply show. In fact it is to the very chapter on the Annunciation, where Mary proclaims her "lowliness," that Pelikan gives the title "Woman of Valor," for he insists that her obedience was active and co-operative in every way.

In a recent interview the author averred that writing this book proved to be unusually demanding, and clearly it required of him the full panoply of his knowledge of world history, his unusual range of languages, his deep philosophical background—and, as he said, his faith. To judge by its gentle tone, the suavity of its style, and the grace of the writing it seems also to have called forth his love as well. Nietzsche, in a passage rarely quoted by his epigones, once said that "anything that constrains a man to love less than unconditionally has severed the roots of his strength: he will wither away, that is to say become dishonest. In producing this effect, history is the antithesis of art: and only if history can endure to be transformed into a work of art will it perhaps be able to preserve instincts or even evoke them." Pelikan's book is saturated in reproductions of art, many in full color. But its glory is that it itself is the work of art Nietzsche so praised in all honest history: history written in love.

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BRIEFLY NOTED

THE INDEX OF LEADING SPIRITUAL INDICATORS. By GEORGE BARNA. *Word. 140 pp. $10.99.*

This is a fascinating if somewhat predictable account of recent trends in American religion by the evangelical pollster George Barna. Among other things, Barna found that Americans are searching for a personalized religion that meets individual needs and minimizes rules and absolutes. The general public is

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not very interested, he reports, in orthodox Christianity, Bible reading, or history. Ignorance abounds. Two-thirds of the population has no idea what "John 3:16" refers to. Six out of ten people believe that "if a person is generally good, or does enough good things for others during their life, they will earn a place in heaven." Ten percent of adults believe that the name of Noah's wife was Joan of Arc. This brief study will bolster the view that too many American churches have failed at every level and in every way.

— Thomas C. Reeves

BY WHAT AUTHORITY? AN EVANGELICAL DISCOVERS CATHOLIC TRADITION. By MARK P. SHEA. *Our Sunday Visitor Books. 192 pp. $7.95.*

C. S. Lewis writes about Mere Christianity as a hallway, from which each Christian can choose a number of confessional doors. Mark Shea's thoughtful and accessible book encourages the reader to consider the Catholic door. Chronicling his own doubts about sola scriptura, he pursues the Catholic Tradition as a possible interpretive key by which Christians can understand the Bible and life. For Shea the choice is obvious in the end, as he argues that the Catholic Tradition outperforms "scripture alone." Shea's argument reflects the new-found interest in tradition among evangelicals. And yet, though some evangelicals are heading toward Rome, Catholicism does not necessarily follow from acceptance of tradition: Others are returning to Geneva or Wittenburg, or even turning toward Constantinople. Whether or not one agrees with Shea's conclusion, the argument presents in a congenial and interesting way the need for evangelicals to consider both the catholic and the Catholic tradition.

— Lynn Robinson

CHRISTIANITY AND CIVIL SOCIETY. By ROBERT WUTHNOW. *Trinity Press International. 103 pp. $15.*

The prolific Princeton author might easily be dismissed as a "Beyondist"—a person who urges that we should move beyond categories such as liberal and conservative so that liberalism can have its way. There is some of that in Wuthnow's argument, but he also wants to take seriously that there are deep and legitimate cultural differences among Americans, some based in religion, that must be engaged in civil discourse. The greater difficulty with his argument is reflected in the "sophistication" that he urges upon Christians. "To be sophisticated, I have suggested, means being willing to give up some control over one's own claims to know the truth, subjecting them to self-evaluation and to the critical commentary of others." Apart from the confusing use of the term "control," the problem with that statement and the entire argument is that Christians can with integrity only ground civil engagement precisely in the truth that they claim to know. The suggestion that civil discourse requires Christians to be less than fully Christian leads either to Christian withdrawal from or rejection of civil discourse. That is the outcome forced by militant secularists, and Professor Wuthnow surely does not want to be party to that.

MILES TO GO: A PERSONAL HISTORY OF SOCIAL POLICY. By DANIEL P. MOYNIHAN. *Harvard University Press. 245 pp. $22.95.*

There are book blurbs and then there is: "Moynihan, the nation's best thinker among politicians since Lincoln and its best politician among thinkers since Jefferson, stands at the summit of a long career in public life." At the summit and over the top. This collection of essays does include "Defining Deviancy Down," which is worth a trip to the library, if not the price of a book by one of our more thoughtful politicians looking back wistfully at, mainly, failed opportunities.

THE NATURE OF CONFESSION: EVANGELICALS AND POSTLIBERALS IN CONVERSATION. Edited by TIMOTHY R. PHILLIPS and DENNIS L. OKHOLM. *InterVarsity. 296 pp. $15.99 paper.*

It is a rare and welcome thing when major disagreements are engaged with honesty, intelligence, and good faith all around. Here we have "premodern" evangelical Protestants in conversation with the "postliberal" hermeneutic represented by George Lindbeck and the late Hans Frei. Among the contributors are Alister McGrath, George Hunsinger, and Gabriel Fackre. One outcome of the exchange is clarifying the fact that historic Christian orthodoxy can be sustained by quite different theories of interpretation, although some evangelical participants are left insisting that the orthodoxy defended is missing an important component, namely, scriptural authority.

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SLOUCHING TOWARD GOMORRAH: MODERN LIBERALISM AND AMERICAN DECLINE. By ROBERT H. BORK. *HarperCollins. 382 pp. $25.*

Cranky, dyspeptic, bad humored, pessimistic. Those are among the many adjectives employed by reviewers. So they want the author to be upbeat about the decline of America? Fortunately, many thoughtful Americans are less interested in Judge Bork's mood today than in what he has to say. What he has to say is said forcefully and persuasively, and no one can leave this book without at least entertaining the salutary suspicion that we are witnessing the end of America as a free and (relatively) virtuous society. The message is obviously being received, for the book has had a long run on the *New York Times'* best-seller list, reaching the second spot, and is the subject of vigorous debates in the worlds of talk. This journal ran an excerpt in the January 1996 issue, and readers will want to go to the book for the more fully developed argument that Bork made in our "End of Democracy?" issue of last November. Were the word "prophetic" not so over-used, especially in religious circles, we would say it applies to this book. Suffice it that Robert Bork's is an acute and relentless intelligence that has produced a jeremiad that could, just maybe, change enough minds and hearts to change the country that he so manifestly cares about.

SOUL OF THE WORLD: NOTES ON THE FUTURE OF PUBLIC CATHOLICISM. By GEORGE WEIGEL. *Eerdmans. 206 pp. $18 paper.*

No stranger to these pages, Weigel here offers a brilliant synthesis that brings together Catholic teaching and the state of Catholicism itself as these relate to the public order. The author is currently working on a biography of John Paul II and has a remarkably comprehensive grasp of this pontificate's contribution to our understanding of the human project. That project is the "public" in the subtitle of a book that weaves Christology, the anthropology of freedom, democratic theory, and the culture wars into what might be called, had the term not been coopted for dubious purposes, a seamless garment. *Soul of the World* is imperative reading for those who would understand the direction of Catholic social teaching, the mind of John Paul II, and the high promise of Christian witness in service to the world that is the object of God's passionate loving.

THE TRUTH ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY: THE CRY OF THE FAITHFUL. By JOHN F. HARVEY. *Ignatius. 376 pp. $17.95 paper.*

A marvelously well-informed and much needed book for Christians with a homosexual orientation and those who try to help them. Father Harvey is the founder of Courage, an organization of homosexual Catholics who strive to live in accord with the teaching of the Church. Foreword by John Cardinal O'Connor and introduction by the noted spiritual director Benedict J. Groeschel. The book also includes appendices by medical authorities on the healing and change of homosexual orientation. This wise and encouraging book will be of great value to all Christians both in helping homosexuals and in countering the cultural aggression of the gay movement.

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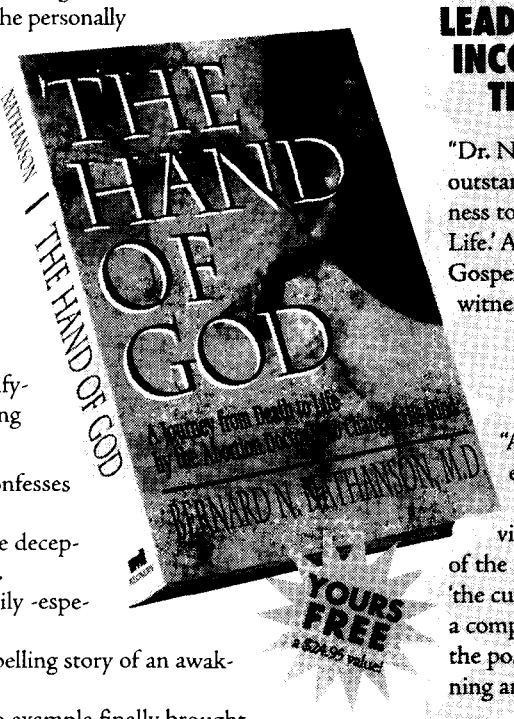

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THE PUBLIC SQUARE

A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life

Richard John Neuhaus

Forgetting the Source and Summit

Come December 31, 1999, there'll be a big millennium party in Times Square. According to Gretchen Dykstra of the business group that runs such things, it will be a twenty-four-hour affair with giant television screens conveying multicultural messages from the planet's twenty-four time zones. There was a contest in which 641 people in twenty-one countries submitted ideas. One idea that was rejected would have an angel descending at midnight to recite the Lord's Prayer, and a giant hand lowering the traditional New Year's ball to the accompaniment of "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands." Another rejected idea had a flying saucer landing in Times Square with two aliens emerging to abduct some earthlings and take them to a safer place.

Ms. Dykstra's committee says a stumbling block is that much of the world—Jews, Muslims, and most Asian countries—use a different calendar, but that will not get in the way of holding a great global bash. Nowhere in this report is it mentioned what or who it is that makes the Year 2000 significant. To that observation some would reply that the party is a matter of looking forward, not backward. In this view, it is an interesting accident of antiquity that we number the years from the birth of Whatshisname, but the world has moved quite beyond that. To mention such antique particulars would be sectarian and divisive, whereas the events planned for Times Square and other places around the world aim, as they say, at uniting the global village.

Christians may be tempted to react to such thinking by claiming a religious copyright on the observance of the millennium or, even worse, settling for some acknowledgment of the "contributions" of Christ and his followers. That is a temptation to be resisted. The apparently secular yearning for human unity is a good thing and, whether secularists know it or not, the result of the cultural diffusion of the Christian message. It might be described as a triumph of Christianity without Christ. Christianity without Christ, however, cannot be sustained.

The Christian response to secular observances should not be one of churlishly grumbling about the neglect of Christ and Christianity. We should, rather, gratefully affirm what is true and worthy in such observances, while ourselves marking the millennium with a powerful and winsome testimony to the One who is the source and summit of all human hope. That is the proposal so compellingly offered in John Paul II's apostolic letter of 1994, *Tertio Millennio Adveniente* (As the Third Millennium Nears). Regrettably, most Christians, including most Catholics, seem to be doing little in response to that proposal. The time really is drawing near. The great fault will be ours if—in Times Square, Berlin, Kinshasa, Buenos Aires, and elsewhere—the Year 2000 is observed with glitzy entertainments and vague utopian yearnings without a luminous witness to the One who is the Alpha and Omega of the human story.

FT

Tongue-Tied in Public

I forget who said it, but I'm fond of quoting it: "America is so large and various that any generalization one might make about it is amply supported by evidence." It was a British visitor in the last century, and it is a generalization amply supported by the evidence. Witness the publications coming out of a big project run by James Davison Hunter and Carl Bowman under the title of *The State of Disunion*. With the help of the Gallup organization, they have attempted a massive survey of the current political culture, and it makes for

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fascinating reading.

With Peter Steinfels of the *New York Times*, however, I wonder how much we really learn from such research. Nearly nine out of ten Americans agree that "America's contribution is one of expanding freedom"; that "with hard work and perseverance, anyone can succeed in America"; and that the nation "was founded upon biblical principles" and "always had a destiny to set an example for other nations." Fewer than 10 percent think America is improving as a nation, and more than half say it is in decline. Steinfels is fascinated by "the complexity, orneriness, and sheer self-contradiction of the American people." He cites as an example that the same majority thinks the federal government is too big and also agrees that "Government often does a better job than people give it credit for." That is not necessarily a self-contradiction. I could easily affirm both.

More to the point is the 85 percent who agree that "values are something that each of us must decide without being influenced by others," and an even higher percentage agreeing that "what is true for me is not necessarily true for other persons." At the same time, three-quarters agree that "we would all be better off if we could live by the same basic moral guidelines," and that "those who violate God's rules will be punished." There would seem to be contradictions here, but maybe not. Most people are not philosophers or social critics, which is just as well.

The impression I take from browsing in *The State of Disunion* is a confirmed sense of how overwhelmingly conservative are the sensibilities of most Americans. Those sensibilities only sporadically come across as convictions that lend themselves to action, however, because the same people do not have a public language for the confident assertion of what they believe. From the media, the educational system, and elsewhere, they learn that the respectable answer in public must be framed in what Alasdair MacIntyre calls the vocabulary of individualistic emotivism. Thus the same people say that what's right for me is not necessarily right for you, and that moral rules are objective and given by God.

Depending on how the question is put, people get chased from one vocabulary to the other. But they have internalized the cultural expectation that public language is relativistic and permissive, while the language of obedience to what Hunter elsewhere calls "the commanding truths" of normative moral tradition is essentially private. In fact, the language of, say, the biblical tradition is as public as can be. But the first language is one of permission, while the second threatens to impose; and most Americans have accepted the imposition of the view that it is a sin, or at least un-American, to impose one's views upon others.

Hunter and Bowman come up with typologies to cluster these various beliefs and attitudes: "Traditionalist," "Pragmatic," "Permissivist," etc. For the most part, however, the typologies track the conventional distinctions of conservative/liberal, right/left. I plan to do more mulling of the data, but at present they seem to reinforce the view that the great majority of Americans are privately conservative but feel forced to use a liberal vocabulary in public. The great success of liberalism has not been to change the minds of the American people but to make them publicly inarticulate about what they know they know.

FT

WHO'S WHO IN WORLD RELIGIONS

I first met David Barrett in 1971 in Nairobi, Kenya, where he was doing pioneering work on indigenous religious movements in Africa, a subject on which I was going to write a book, until my attention was diverted by developments in South Africa. In recent years, Barrett has been running the research office of the AD2000 Global Evangelization Movement in Rockville, Virginia. Among numbers crunchers on world religion, Barrett is at the top of his field. He publishes an annual summary in the *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* and edits the relevant sections of the *Britannica Book of the Year* and *Britannica World Data*. While Barrett's data are state of the art, he cautions that the art is precisely that, an art. Estimates involve some delicate distinctions and carefully controlled guesswork. But it is fascinating stuff.

For instance, there are 1.9 billion Christians in the world and slightly over one billion Muslims. Barrett estimates that in the year 2025 there will be over three billion Christians and 1.8 billion Muslims. Among Christians, there are 56 million Anglicans, 4 million Catholics (non-Roman), 20 million "marginal Protestants" (non-Catholic but also not identified with any Protestant tradition), 167 million nonwhite indigenous Christians (mainly new African groups combining Christianity and tribal religions), 187 million Eastern Orthodox (Russian, Greek, et al.), 347 million Protestants, and somewhat over a billion Roman Catholics.

Not everyone is happy with the way that Barrett counts Jews. He says that in 1900 there were 12.2 million Jews, 15.5 million in 1970, 18.2 million at present, and he projects that there will be 25.5 million in the year 2025. These figures are in tension

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with the common claim that "half of world Jewry" was wiped out in the Holocaust, and that the number of Jews is declining. For twenty-five years, Barrett has been in discussion with Jewish specialists who generally give a much lower figure for the number of Jews living today. One Jewish publication claims, "Statistical data are difficult to obtain among Jews owing to the lack of public sources." Barrett challenges that: "Half of all nations in the world enumerate religious Jews and ethnic Jews in their decennial population censuses, and I have records of them all going back 140 years. Polls, partial censuses, sociological studies are all legion. Making sense of them is more difficult, but again the literature is enormous."

He says that Jewish statistical experts use the concept of "core Jew," meaning "real Jews" who are known, professing, affiliated, and usually practicing. Barrett, however, uses the larger category of "adherents" based on the definition in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights. He also includes adherents of "Jewish sects or cults, crypto-Jews, Third World adherents of Judaism who are ignored or disowned by core Jews, Black Jews, Black Hebrews, African groups like the Bayahuda in Uganda, and Asian groups like the Cochin Jews in Kerala and the Bney Israel in Bombay." There are also groups that are somewhere between Christianity and Judaism or Islam and Judaism, but are more Jewish than Christian or Muslim. Then, of course, there are Messianic Jews, and ethnic Jews who are Christians or atheists. "If one examines every source figure in this rigorous fashion," says Barrett, "no conflicting figures emerge, although proponents of core Judaism may not like the larger totals that result."

Then there is the question of Christian martyrs. During the Cold War, Barrett's figure of 300,000 martyrs per year was widely used. His definition is important: "A martyr is a Christian *believer* who *loses* his or her life *prematurely*, in a situation of *witness*, and as a result of human *hostility*" (emphasis in original). So, for example, while forty million Christians were killed in World War II, only three million can be called martyrs. In that number he includes the one million of the six million Jewish martyrs killed in the Holocaust who were Christian Jews. Since 1991, when organized Soviet assassinations of Christian leaders and other oppressions ceased, Barrett estimates that there are 150,000 Christian martyrs each year. He adds, "Naturally, these have to be estimates because, although I am on the lookout for new information regularly, often I do not hear of even dreadful massacres for months or even years after the event." He notes that media coverage is always spasmodic, so we only hear about a fraction of even the most egregious cases.

Just to round out the picture, there are a little over a billion people classified as "non-religious" or "atheist," 766 million Hindus, 337 million Buddhists, and 20 million Sikhs. And of course within every group there are disputes over who really belongs—who is a "real" Jew, a "real" Muslim, a "real" Christian or, for that matter, a "real" atheist. God alone searches hearts, but among those who crunch numbers and keep spread sheets up to date, there is probably none more conscientious than David Barrett.

FT

SORTING OUT HISTORICAL HORRIBLES

Invoking the most frightful of alternatives to having to deal with women, Professor Higgins sings, "I'd prefer a new edition / Of the Spanish Inquisition." Edgar Allen Poe's "The Pit and the Pendulum" and Dostoyevsky's "Legend of the Grand Inquisitor" are among the many literary masterpieces that have indelibly imprinted upon our minds the Spanish Inquisition as what historians call the "Black Legend." Now here comes along Professor Marvin O'Connell of Notre Dame, writing in *Catholic Dossier*. He wants it understood that he is no apologist for the Spanish Inquisition, but he is one of those rare historians who suffer from scrupulosity when it comes to facts and he thinks some things should be set straight.

For instance, Isabella and Ferdinand wanted the Inquisition established in 1478 for what seemed at the time unexceptionable political reasons. It is ridiculously anachronistic, says O'Connell, to speak of the Inquisition in terms of "church and state," since there was only the state that, in centuries of conflict with the Moors, defined its aspiration to control the Iberian peninsula in terms of Christianity—as its opponents defined their imperial ambitions in terms of Islam. To be a heretic was a religious offense but a political crime. In short, heresy was treason. That was also the case, it should be noted, in Elizabethan England where Catholics were persecuted and killed.

But in the modern lexicon of historical horribles, the Inquisition is right up there with the Gulag Archipelago and Auschwitz, and in its first decade and a half (technically, it lasted three hundred years) it was very cruel. A high figure for the number of people executed as heretics in that early period is two thousand. With tragic irony, almost all of these were *conversos*, Muslims and Jews who sought to escape expulsion by becoming Christians. The irony

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is that, had they remained Jews or Muslims, they could not have been deemed heretics. Of course not all *conversos* ended up at the stake. Historian William Monter, cited by O'Connell, writes that the New Christians "represent the first known large-scale and long-term assimilation of Jews into any Christian society. Although the process included many painful adaptations, some severe backlash, and even a decade of brutal persecution under the Inquisition, it ended with their general integration into Spanish society. Their descendents quietly flouted racist codes and contributed to the vibrant Catholicism of Golden Age Spain; St. Teresa of Avila was the granddaughter of a New Christian penanced by the Inquisition."

The Inquisition soon began to wind down. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when Spanish sovereignty extended from Italy to most of Latin America, on average less than three persons a year were executed by the Inquisition, which was set up wherever Spain ruled. O'Connell writes that, in a century in which mass atrocities have reached a quantitative and qualitative pitch that would have been inconceivable to Torquemada, "I think a measure of discretion would be appropriate when bemoaning the wickedness of the Spanish Inquisition." No letters of protest, please. Let the record show that I, with Professor O'Connell, think the Spanish Inquisition was a very bad thing, and I will do all in my power to oppose any attempt by the Supreme Court to bring it back.

FT

To Live Well

"If I had been asked to choose the course of my life I would not have done as well as the leading of Providence and the direction of superiors have done for me. I can honestly say that there is no one in the world whom I have cause to envy. All of this is not of my own deserving. It is God's gift, and he alone deserves the praise." That is Father Avery Dulles in a long appendix to a new edition of *A Testimonial to Grace* (Sheed & Ward), an account of his conversion to Catholicism first published fifty years ago.

In the appendix, called "Reflections on a Theological Journey," Fr. Dulles, undoubtedly the most widely respected Catholic theologian in the U.S. and a frequent contributor to these pages, is not entirely uncritical of the influence of the Second Vatican Council: "While many of the conciliar and postconciliar reforms were no doubt prudent and necessary accommodations to the times, they did not all strike me as improvements. It was difficult for me to accept the virtual banishment of Latin from the liturgy and the substitution of new popular tunes for the imposing Gregorian chant or the mellifluous Renaissance polyphony. The depreciation of devotion to the saints and the removal of shrines and statues from the churches struck me as impoverishments that had to be regretfully endured. It might be necessary, I concluded, to live through a barren season of slovenly improvisation until the Church could experience some kind of cultural revival."

Although bureaucracy and social action were not his fields, Fr. Dulles did get involved in the bishops' ambitious plans for a National Pastoral Council. That plan became the victim of a massive "Call to Action" conference which met in Detroit in October 1976. "The assembly at Detroit was nothing if not dramatic. More than 100 bishops were in attendance. A total of 1,340 delegates came from 150 dioceses and 94 national Catholic organizations as varied as the Catholic Committee for Urban Ministry, Network, the Center of Concern, the Quixote Center, and a variety of questionably Catholic organizations representing gay and lesbian activists, resigned priests, and the like. In three short days the carefully nuanced working papers were gutted by a series of radical amendments, resulting in some 182 resolutions, including some that called for ordination of women, acceptance of married priests, the admission of divorced and remarried Catholics to the sacraments, freedom of conscience regarding contraception, amnesty to those who had evaded military service, condemnation of the production and threat to use nuclear weapons, support for the Equal Rights Amendment, and the end of all discrimination against homosexuals. Many of these resolutions could not be accepted by the bishops, either because they were contrary to Catholic doctrine or because they were beyond the competence of the national conference."

That was twenty years ago, but it was, as they say, a defining moment and we are still living with the consequences. Dulles observes: "The Call to Action assembly provided an object lesson in how a small group of militant activists could manipulate a large majority of open-minded liberal delegates, thus aligning the assembly with an agenda that had little in common with the Catholic tradition, the social teaching of the Church, and the concerns of the great majority of worshipers. The process exhibited the naiveté of the organizers and led to a defeat of the intentions of the bishops, who had hoped to usher in a new era of coresponsibility and participation in the life and government of the Church in this nation. What eventuated was a polarized situation that pitted reformers against conservatives. To this day the 'Call to Action' movement continues to press for the adoption of the rejected proposals of the Detroit meeting and thus gives a voice to groups that would

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like to see a Catholic Church organized along liberal democratic lines."

The experience with Call to Action reinforced Fr. Dulles' determination to stick to his theological last. Very much a Jesuit, he concludes his reflection with this: "I am immeasurably grateful for the years in which the Lord has permitted me to serve him in a society that bears as its motto: *Ad majorem Dei gloriam*. I trust that his grace will not fail me, and that I will not fail his grace, in the years to come."

FT

When the Church "Interferes"

Herewith the opening paragraphs of a statement adopted by the Fellowship of Catholic Scholars (FCS) and sent to all the bishops in the U.S.: "A great deal has been said about the difficulties of the application of Pope John Paul II's Apostolic Constitution *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* on Catholic universities in this country, particularly the application of Canon 812 of the Code of Canon Law, which requires that teachers in theological disciplines have a mandate from competent ecclesiastical authority. This is held by some to constitute an unwarranted 'outside' interference in the institutional autonomy of a university, and this in turn is said to be unacceptable by current United States academic and university standards and practice. The real difficulties supposedly posed for American Catholic institutions by Canon 812, however, have surely been greatly exaggerated. For one thing, American universities regularly and routinely accept many requirements imposed from 'outside'—requirements established by local, state, and federal governments, by accrediting associations, by foundations and other funding entities or donors, by professional associations in fields such as engineering, medicine, law, nursing, the sciences, and so on. American universities think nothing at all of accepting these requirements constantly imposed on them from 'outside'; it is standard practice, in fact. Only when the subject is theology and the outside entity is the Church, apparently, does the question of outside 'interference' in the governance of Catholic higher education institutions normally even get raised. Yet the very data of Catholic theology as a science necessarily contain within themselves the teaching of the Church's Magisterium; Catholic theology fails both academically and professionally if it does not accept this; Catholic institutions undermine their own necessary foundation when they try to pretend that they can do Catholic theology independently of the Church."

Exactly how Catholic institutions should be accountable to the Church is eminently debatable, but that they should be accountable would seem to be beyond dispute if they are to represent themselves as being Catholic. The concern that FCS has expressed to the bishops is that the bishops' committee responsible for the implementation of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* has apparently decided that it should not be implemented in the U.S. The statement's argument about institutions accepting "outside" requirements of government, foundations, and other agencies is much to the point. The history of Catholic higher education in recent decades is not so much one of seeking independence as it is one of exchanging the requirements of the Church for the requirements of institutions that have no interest in, and are frequently hostile to, education that is distinctively Catholic. And, of course, the problems of religious identity and academic freedom are not limited to Catholic schools. Evangelical Protestants who do not want their schools to go the secularizing way of their liberal Protestant counterparts might well wish they had an authoritative framework such as that proposed by *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*. Catholics have it, but, according to FCS, seem unprepared to use it. One must hope that the bishops are not so timorous as their critics suggest, and as the academic opponents of ecclesial accountability count on. Regrettably, last November's meeting of the bishops did little to enhance that hope.

FT

Coming Clean About *Brown*

The above is the title of an important article by Richard E. Morgan, the William Nelson Cromwell Professor of Constitutional Law and Government at Bowdoin College, in *City Journal*, a publication of the Manhattan Institute. Arguing that we should get over the almost universal deference paid the 1954 *Brown* decision of the Supreme Court ending racial segregation in schools, Morgan brings together impressive evidence of a consensus among constitutional scholars that *Brown* was wrong legally but right morally. Yet allowing a moral override of the Constitution in that case, says Morgan, gave the courts a license for the judicial usurpation of politics that has taken place in the past four decades.

In their 1995 book *The New Color Line*, Paul Craig Roberts and Lawrence Stratton argued that the

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roots of *Brown* are to be found in Gunnar Myrdal's very influential 1944 study, *An American Dilemma*, in which he contended, as they put it, that "America's racist impulses were so strong that segregation could not be overturned through the democratic process." Now, however, a growing number of scholars are saying that *Brown*, far from hastening the civil rights movement and the end of segregation, actually delayed a process of desegregation that was taking place under the pressure of cultural, economic, and demographic forces. Truly effective action against racial segregation was legislative, in the civil rights and voting acts of 1964 and 1965, which *Brown* did more to hinder than help.

Whether or not one agrees with that reading of the history—and I am inclined to the view that there was a positive correlation between *Brown* and, for instance, the Montgomery bus boycott of 1956—Morgan's observation is convincing: "After decades of conservative electoral outcomes and hundreds of state and federal judicial appointments intended to end 'judicial legislation,' and with public opinion sullenly resistant to much of the social engineering ordered from the bench, how is it that legally unjustified judicial interventions into policy making and administration still occur routinely? Why does our sprawling 'rights industry' continue to grow and succeed so often in persuading judges to establish policies that cannot be put in place through the normal democratic processes of election and legislation? No single factor satisfactorily accounts for the powerful persistence of judicial activism in a period in which it is intellectually discredited and widely unpopular. The atavistic radicalism common in law faculties is certainly part of the answer. But a neglected key to understanding why judicial activism has proved so hard to stop is the aura of legitimacy bestowed on it by *Brown*."

Morgan continues: "In the wake of *Brown* constitutional law came to exercise the same sort of appeal to progressive reformers as economics did in the 1930s. Courts were now seen as a source of governmental power that could force unpopular changes that could not be secured through representative institutions—a shockingly illiberal proposition when made explicit, but wonderfully exciting as long as it is cloaked in euphemisms about helping democracy overcome 'deadlocks.' If judges could sidestep the electoral and legislative processes, bypassing the very forms of the Constitution, in order to serve the higher good of ending Jim Crow, then judges could do many things about which the country was deeply divided."

Even principled opponents of judicial usurpation are customarily intimidated when "the *Brown* card" is played. "Well then," it is said, "you must be opposed to *Brown v. Board of Education*." At which one mumbles something about "exceptions to the rule," lest one be accused of racism. Morgan thinks that response is a big mistake. "Once one admits a role in one case for the Court as extra-constitutional promoter and architect for social change, it is impossible to explain why that justification should not apply to other situations."

I am not sure that that necessarily follows. History is not a script written according to exceptionless principles. In retrospect, one may allow that there were instances in which only the judiciary could do something that needed doing. The catch is that, in principle, the judiciary is not authorized to decide when such an extraordinary circumstance exists. And, if there is a popular consensus that something needs to be changed, it can then be changed democratically, by legislation. To put it differently, one may allow that in a particular case the wrong means achieved a good end without affirming that wrong means should be employed to achieve good ends.

The claim that *Brown* was rightly decided on constitutional grounds is defended also by notable conservatives such as Robert Bork. We do not need to take a position on that, however, in order to oppose the subsequent exploitation of *Brown* to provide legal and moral cover for the judicial usurpation of politics. Morgan favors a constitutional amendment. "Above all, we must seek to secure passage and ratification of a constitutional amendment specifically barring government at any level from making decisions that either advantage or disadvantage persons based on race. This would finally complete the work of Reconstruction, align the text of the Constitution with our national ideals, and bury Jim Crow the way he should have been buried in the first place—by votes in legislative assemblies." Morgan was writing before the citizens of California democratically approved just such a measure, Proposition 209. Predictably, the opponents of the measure moved, immediately and successfully, to tie it up in the courts. This only increases the urgency of Morgan's proposal.

The merits of such an amendment would extend far beyond ending the nastiness and injustices generated by affirmative action, quotas, and other race-based social engineering. It would be a powerful declaration of independence from judicial tyranny, and heartening evidence that the American people still have an appetite and capacity for self-government, preferring to be citizens rather than subjects.

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■ The following news item is from *Sunstroke* magazine, whose editors say they picked it up on the internet. We have not been able to authenticate the story. "SALT LAKE CITY (AP)—In a surprise move that left competitors stunned, Microsoft has followed up its successful merger with the Roman Catholic Church by announcing a cash buyout of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In recent weeks, high officials of the LDS church (more commonly known as the Mormons) had been rumored to be in negotiations with both Novell and Lotus, but the Microsoft move came as a complete surprise to most industry/religious observers. With much of Microsoft's competition based in Utah, many current employees of WordPerfect and Novell commented (anonymously) that they would feel morally obliged to jump ship to Microsoft. Novell is countering by pointing to noncompetitive clauses in senior personnel's contracts and urging conversion to the Reorganized LDS Church, with whom Novell has entered into hasty negotiations. Microsoft officials denied any intent to pirate Novell employees with this move, though they indicated that they were willing to sell Novell their Eastern Rite Catholic subsidiaries to avoid antitrust action. According to the official press release, Microsoft CEO and Pontiff Bill Gates said, 'We've been hoping to acquire the Mormons for a long time. They're a fast growing organization with a large, mobile, and highly dedicated sales force which will work synergistically with our worldwide Catholic retail outlets. More importantly, we're acquiring the LDS "convert the dead" technology which we will incorporate into OLE 3.0 (scheduled to arrive in the next versions of Windows and Windows NT, currently code named "Rome" and "Jerusalem" respectively.)' Gates went on to say, 'This will expand our user base to generations of users who never before had the chance to purchase Microsoft products.' Microsoft insiders who declined to be quoted predicted record profits from requiring deceased church members to purchase annual upgrades in order to maintain their eternal salvation."

■ The terrible thing about those religious rightists is that they don't understand the virtue of civility. Analyzing contemporary conservatism in the *New York Review of Books*, Jason Epstein illustrates a more elevated political discourse. He explains why moral conservatives and economic conservatives are in common cause: "What binds the two is their hostility to federal regulatory and taxing power or, in a larger sense, their shared conviction that the United States ought to be a largely homogeneous culture, a fairy-tale version of its disheveled self, a Disneyland whose brave citizens are free to make their fortunes no matter what the damage to competing interests, where differences are settled man to man, where women sing in church when they are not at their stoves incubating embryos, where overt nonconformists aren't welcome and the income tax has been repealed." It is this convergence of interests, Epstein says, that has turned the Republican Party "into a congeries of fiery eccentrics." Interestingly, Epstein lifts what used to be a trump card from the deck of economic conservatism to argue that declining production and the national deficit "are the greatest challenge to the United States in its history." In its entire history? Writers in the *New York Review* are big on superlatives. Those who know more about economics than Jason Epstein or I have persuaded me that we are facing a really big problem of unfunded obligations to the generation now getting ready to retire. If politicians are to face up to the issue as Epstein wants, however, it might help to cultivate some of those conservatives from whom he stole the issue, instead of dismissing them with contemptuous, and contemptible, incivility.

■ "Welcome to the archbishop of the capital of the world!" said Pope John Paul II when greeting John O'Connor after his appointment as Archbishop of New York in 1984. Cardinal O'Connor is still going strong and I look forward to his being my bishop for another five years or so. (He handed in his resignation when he turned 75 in January 1996, but the Pope, who is the same age as O'Connor, seems to think they are both far from completing the work they have been given to do.) As for the capital of the world, my friends know that I am less than half joking when I conjecture that over the heavenly gates will be a big sign: "From the Wonderful People Who Brought You New York City, THE NEW JERUSALEM." Those who didn't like New York in this life will have another place to go. Nathan Glazer of Harvard shares that salutary passion for New York and, reviewing some new books on the city in the *Public Interest*, has some heavy-duty reflections. He is led to think of one of Parkinson's laws: "When the capital is complete, the empire is ready to fall. Or perhaps, more grandly, Hegel's owl of Minerva, which takes flight at dusk." He observes that the *Economist* recently had a piece on the United States as "the old country," which leads him to this: "The first thing one must note is that, if the United States is now, in certain respects, 'the old country,' New York is, if we consider its place in the United States, 'the old city.' I think the interest in New York is sparked and maintained because it is a city that was

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shaped and, in large measure, completed before the age of the automobile. It is dense; its center is not pockmarked by parking lots; its streets are edged by unbroken lines of buildings and crowded with pedestrians; its architecture, even though so many of its grand structures (I think of Pennsylvania Station, modeled after the Baths of Caracalla, and perhaps as strongly built) have been prematurely destroyed, contains more examples of the buildings of the past 150 years than any other American city, and some of these, such as the cast-iron buildings of Soho, form large and unique neighborhoods of the past. Many of its great bridges are structures of the nineteenth, rather than the twentieth century. Its icons, the Statue of Liberty, the skyscraper forest of lower Manhattan, the Empire State Building, and the Chrysler Building, all took their shape before one-third of the twentieth century had unfolded. And we are now at the end of that century." Of course Glazer, like most people talking about New York, is referring mainly to Manhattan, not to the "outer boroughs" of Brooklyn, Queens, Bronx, and, dare one say it, Staten Island. He is right about New York as "the old city." Most every day I walk from the house on 19th Street to the parish church on 14th and over to the office at Fifth Avenue and 20th, and I have only to squint my eyes a little to see the New York that was in 1897 and even earlier. The physical ambiance bespeaks continuity and conservatism, which is maybe why New Yorkers feel they can risk being so crazy in their ideas and behavior. But what excuse does the rest of the country have?

■ The big money on the lecture circuit is with corporations and their myriad business associations. I'm no good at it. I tried it once. An acquaintance on the board of a Fortune 500 company persuaded me—with the lure of the largest fee I've ever been offered—to speak to a workshop of its top executives on the subject of business and spirituality. I did my democratic capitalism shtick, emphasizing the connections between economic, political, and spiritual freedom and the importance of competition in human creativity. It was a complete bust. That is not what they wanted, it was not what they wanted at all. What did they want? Afterward, the CEO showed me their lineup of most popular speakers: new age gurus, friends of the inner child, advocates of male vulnerability, feminist opponents of hierarchical organizations, and *soi-disant* socialists who lay on a guilt trip about making money. I don't know how typical that company is but I was reminded of the experience while reading Andrew Ferguson's wickedly amusing *Fools' Names, Fools' Faces* (Atlantic Monthly Press). He has a marvelous discussion of corporate America's mindlessly eager sponsorship of a cultural revolution that makes no secret of its contempt for corporate America. "The revolution proceeds without a shot being fired, with scarcely a peep of protest. . . . The white-male power structure of late-twentieth-century America is the first to pay people to dismantle itself."

■ The man admitted to being shameless in publishing his opinions about almost everything (some of us have reason to be reticent on that subject), but the nice thing is that the *Chesterton Review* can keep coming up with things that haven't seen the blight of print for many decades. For instance, here is a 1909 newspaper column by G. K. Chesterton on the always lively subject of religion in government schools. Apparently a Dr. Clifford had proposed (as so many Dr. Cliffords still propose today) that the Bible should be taught as literature. Chesterton was unconvinced: "Therefore, in the struggles of which Dr. Clifford is so largely the center, I sympathize with secular education, but not because any sympathy is with the new-fashioned Puritan who wishes the Bible to be treated as literature. My sympathy is with the old-fashioned Puritan, who does not want the Bible to be treated as literature, because he happens to have a religion which is about the most interesting thing a man can have. It is the old-fashioned theologians who ought to insist on secular education. It is the orthodox Puritans who ought to want the Bible kept out of the schools. The truth can, indeed, be put in a kind of dilemma. Either the Bible must be offered as something extraordinary or as something ordinary. If it is offered as something extraordinary, that is certainly unfair to the agnostics and the doubters. If it is offered as something ordinary, that is grossly and atrociously unfair to the theologians and the believers. There really seem to be only three possibilities in connection with the matter, and they all have objections against them of the most ultimate and iron sort, objections of principle. Suppose a child says, 'Did Jesus really come out of the grave?' Either the teacher must answer him insincerely, and that is immorality, or he must answer him sincerely, and that is sectarian education, or he must refuse to answer him at all, and that is first of all bad manners and a sort of timid tyranny; and it is, moreover, gross and monstrous idolatry. It is something darker and more irrational than a religion—it is a silence."

■ A reader sends us a magazine called *POZ*, a very slick publication for people living with AIDS and their friends. Prominent among the advertisers are companies offering to buy up life insurance policies so that people afflicted with the disease can spend the money before they die. Andrew Sullivan, the former editor of *New Republic*, is a contributing editor of *POZ*. Sullivan says, "Of all the magazines in America, *POZ* is the one I most admire and wanted to write for," which may be saying something about the *New Republic*. In this issue Sullivan has a conversation with Larry Kramer, author of *Faggots* and founder of ACT UP. Sullivan

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says he met Kramer in "a dark corner of the Spike, a gay bar in New York City, where he accosted me about my own indolence in the time of the plague." Apparently that prompted this conversation in which Kramer goes on and on, in the manner for which he is famous (the editors of *POZ* call it "screaming"), and Sullivan gently suggests that Kramer is indulging in hyperbole. Sullivan thinks Kramer goes too far when he claims that politicians who have not stopped AIDS are murderers and that the disease is a "holocaust" deliberately perpetrated against homosexuals. On politics, Sullivan indicates that he agrees when Kramer says that "it doesn't really matter who's in office because the system stays the same." Sullivan says that gays lack political clout because they're invisible and they remain invisible because they're scared. Leaders of the gay community such as Kramer and himself "should aggressively confront the gay community" to become more visible. Infighting among gays is also a problem. "Our foes have more discipline," observes Sullivan. As he has on numerous occasions, Sullivan discusses his being Catholic and gay. "Part of me thinks I should be in a monastery," he says. Sullivan says that he does not have the hope to believe that AIDS could become a survivable disease. "I don't know whether it's my Catholic upbringing, but I regard these natural events as 'Oh, well, we're all [expletive].' There is no cure to anything. Life is a series of calamities which we survive with whatever serenity we can muster." Toward the end of these odd reflections on matters moral and spiritual, Sullivan declares, "I think the most important decision for gay men to make . . . is whether to have oral sex without a condom." Kramer says he hopes Sullivan is wrong. "Would you let someone perform oral sex on you?" asks Sullivan, and Kramer responds in the negative. Nor does he share Sullivan's great interest in condoms. "I think our AIDS organizations have made a major blunder in promoting 'healthy sexuality,'" Kramer says, "because I don't know where you draw the line. If you say you can take marijuana, who's to say you shouldn't take cocaine?" "I used to think you looked very cute," declares Kramer, "but now I'm a married man." A demure Andrew Sullivan responds, "But now I look like a wreck, you mean. I was out too late last night." And so it goes with this curious exchange. Since this curious interview in the subcultural press, Sullivan has resigned as editor of TNR (reportedly with the help of a not-so-gentle push), announcing that he has AIDS but expects to be writing for many more years. As best we understand the situation, Mr. Sullivan is a gifted gentleman who earnestly believes that he is trying to bring a measure of moral sanity to the gay movement—and refuses to recognize the essential madness of the cause to which his person, his politics, and his faith have become so largely captive.

■ There was a period of confusion from 1970 to 1980, says Monsignor William Smith, about whether Catholics could also be Masons, but he thinks it quite definite now that the answer is no. After citing pertinent canon law, he remarks: "Perhaps a religious Naturalism is better than no belief at all but for the professing Christian this is a retreat from the Gospel. Freemasonry clearly rejects dogma and the possibility of absolute truth. The Inspiration of the Bible and the Divinity of Christ cannot be periodic lay-asides for believing Catholics. When revealed doctrines are relegated to the harmless status of private opinion, will it or not, one contributes further to the endemic relativism that John Dewey so much fostered in education and Oliver Wendell Holmes advanced in jurisprudence." Although Freemasonry claims to be religiously "anti-particularistic," says Smith, its symbols, oaths, and rituals clearly constitute a particular religion. This, he hastens to add, does not preclude fruitful dialogue between Christians and Masons, just as one can dialogue with Muslims but cannot be both a Christian and a Muslim.

■ "Money is the biggest threat to the democratic process." So says Ronald Dworkin, professor of law at Oxford and New York University, who is noted for espousing the view that judges should override popular sentiment by putting their own moral judgments into law. Judges, Dworkin contends, are like novelists working collectively on a story line that is open-ended. His theory, largely embraced by the judiciary, is of course "the biggest threat to the democratic process." It is a comfort to note, however, that in this article in the *New York Review of Books* Dworkin is prepared to challenge judges when he disagrees with them. He disagrees strongly with the 1976 *Buckley* decision of the Supreme Court which ruled that constitutionally protected free speech is an obstacle to regulating the amount of money spent in political campaigns. "We should feel no compunction in declaring the decision a mistake, and in attempting to avoid its consequences through any reasonable and effective device we can find or construct." (As in concoct?) *Buckley*, says Dworkin, "misunderstood not only what free speech really is but what it really means for free people to govern themselves." Really, really, Mr. Dworkin. I confess to a certain skepticism about his belief that it would be a good thing if politicians had less money for television because then campaigns "would have to rely more on reporters and events directed by nonpartisan groups," but it is reassuring to know that Ronald Dworkin, the paladin of the imperial judiciary, does believe in self-governance, of a sort, after all.

■ In 1992 when *Time* compiled a list of the ten people who had contributed most to this millennium, four were Italian speaking: St. Francis of Assisi, Columbus, Michelangelo, and Galileo.

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Four were German speaking: Luther, Gutenberg, Mozart, and Einstein. Two spoke English: Shakespeare and Jefferson. Father John Navone, an American teaching at the Gregorian in Rome, includes that in "Obiter Dicta" appended to his delightful little book, *The Land and the Spirit of Italy: The Texture of Italian Religious Culture.* While he is getting things off his chest, Fr. Navone offers a scathing critique of anti-immigrant sentiment directed against Italians in this country. For example, in his 1902 history of the American people Woodrow Wilson wrote: "Now there came multitudes of men of the lowest class from the south of Italy and the man of the meaner sort out of Hungary and Poland, men out of ranks where there was neither skill nor energy nor any initiative of quick intelligence; and they came in numbers which increased from year to year, as if the countries south of Europe were disburdening themselves of the more sordid and helpless elements of the population." But most of the 215-page book is devoted to what the title suggests. This engaging tribute to the greatness of things Italian is available at a cost of $20 (plus $2.50 postage) direct from the publisher: Legas, P.O. Box 040328, Brooklyn, NY 11204.

■ The idea that Stalin betrayed the more benign revolution of Lenin was a myth successfully championed by Trotsky. Richard Pipes of Harvard vigorously destroys the myth in *The Unknown Lenin: From the Secret Archive* (Yale University Press), which is reviewed by Eugene Genovese who writes: "Pipes repeatedly expresses outrage over Lenin's words and actions, which is understandable. Yet his outrage blurs the essentials of his own argument. He is so determined to destroy Lenin's image as a revolutionary saint that he sometimes comes dangerously close to obscuring what I believe he knows to constitute the heart of the matter: the nature of revolutionary saints. There is no point in condemning people for adhering to a murderous ideology and then condemning them for doing what that ideology requires. There is no point in berating Lenin for having acted like a savage, since savagery is what has always distinguished the saints of social revolution."

■ Entrepreneurship is a thing of wonder. No sooner did Australia's Northern Territory adopt the world's most permissive euthanasia law than an Australian doctor develops computer software that is a great advance over Dr. Kevorkian's labor intensive and generally messy ways. It's called the "Deliverance" program, and it asks the patient who is hooked up to an intravenous drip line three questions to make sure he is aware of what he is doing. The last question is, "If you press YES, you will cause a lethal injection to be given within thirty seconds and you will die. Do you wish to proceed? Yes/No." Let's hear no more of this alarmist talk about "the culture of death."

■ Writing in *Commonweal*, Father Charles Curran of Southern Methodist University complains about an alleged disconnect between papal social teaching and papal teaching on personal and sexual ethics. He contrasts *Veritatis Splendor* and *Evangelium Vitae* with the Pope's 1995 address at the United Nations. The methodology of the former, says Curran, is stuck in a static preoccupation with universal moral truths while the UN address reflects a hermeneutic attuned to historical change. Personal and sexual ethics, he says, should be similarly attuned to history while maintaining "very significant continuities in the teachings." First, encyclicals and an address to the UN are not texts of comparable authority. Second, the encyclicals comprehensively set forth Christian and specifically Catholic teaching, while a UN address is pitched to the public square most broadly construed. Third, Curran is right that the social teachings reflect the lessons of history with respect to democracy, religious freedom, the market economy, and other questions. But what have we learned from history about, for example, abortion, homosexuality, and fornication that suggests the Church should change its teaching? Fr. Curran does not ask that question. The answer, I believe, is that everything we have learned in, say, the last thirty years confirms the wisdom of traditional teaching. Curran says that in the 1968 encyclical *Humanae Vitae,* Paul VI reaffirmed the teaching on contraception "primarily because he could not accept the inference necessarily to be drawn from any change that the past teaching was in any way erroneous." On the contrary, in the encyclical Paul VI explained why the teaching was necessary, among other reasons, in order to avoid all the consequences of divorcing sex from procreation and the responsibilities of parenthood. In view of all that has happened in the last three decades, *Humanae Vitae* was obviously prophetic. Fr. Curran worries about the "consistency and coherency of papal moral teaching." If consistency and coherence is his concern, he might have foregone publishing what is but another confused swipe at the teaching authority from which he is, alas, a chronic dissenter.

■ "Wojtyla's tragedy, of course, is that he began by benefiting from the popularity born of resilience in the face of persecution, and only later proceeded to expose his Church to ridicule for its moral intransigence." Why, of course. Why didn't we think of that? Tony Judt of New York University thinks of a lot of things that are not so. He allows that John Paul II has done some good things. For instance, "under his direction the Vatican has ceased to hold Jews responsible for the Crucifixion." (In fact, that was done by *Nostra Aetate*, a document of Vatican Council II.) But mostly the Pope has done bad things. For instance, "he turned his back on a 1966 commission on contraception" that suggested birth control might be acceptable in some circumstances.

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(That was done by Paul VI in his 1968 encyclical *Humanae Vitae.*) But Judt's point is that the Pope is "a man of many extremes." For instance, "For this Pope, marriage is not just a sacrament but a vocation." How extreme can you get? "This is a man," Judt complains, "whose central contention about the modern world, as expounded in his many writings, is that it has undertaken for three hundred years a war against God and Christian values, a conflict in which he has now sought to engage himself and his Church to the full." The Pope is a man of careful distinctions. Judt apparently has not read the many writings, including encyclicals, in which the Pope lauds modernity's progress in economics, politics, and devotion to freedom. And Judt is apparently of the eccentric view that the militant secularism issuing from the Enlightenment is not at war with God and Christian values. Although he, along with most other critics, says that *His Holiness*, the book by Carl Bernstein and Marco Politi, is virtually worthless, he accepts at face value their claim that John Paul believes that "social questions are best left to sociologists." That does make it difficult to explain the numerous writings of this Pope on Catholic social doctrine. For Tony Judt, as for others who indulge in similarly uninformed rants, everything they don't like about this pontificate, and about the Catholic Church, is attributed to "Catholic fundamentalism." Most fundamental in their fundamentalism is the obsession with the Church's alleged "obsession with marriage and abortion." Judt is deeply offended by John Paul's "utter unconcern with the widespread offense given by his moral pronouncements." The Pope is no doubt profoundly concerned about many things, but it is probably true that he loses no sleep over the fact that the message of which he is the servant is not inoffensive. The gravamen of Judt's essay is that the author is offended that the Pope does not think the way he does. One must wonder whether it is worth more than five pages of the distinguished *New York Review of Books* to let the world know that Tony Judt really doesn't like the Pope.

■ According to the *Rocky Mountain News*, the one word everyone could agree on to describe a recent meeting in Denver was "incredible." The meeting of sixty clergy and an expected crowd of hundreds was sponsored by the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Rights and aimed at exploring "the religious roots of abortion rights." The Planned Parenthood spokesperson said, "Clergy from all major denominations except the Catholic Church are represented." Surely there are, say, Southern Baptist and Assemblies of God churches in Denver? Keynote speaker was Prof. Tom Troeger of Iliff Seminary, who refused to state his own position on the abortion license. He said, "What I am in favor of above all things is the freedom of people to exercise their extraordinarily varying religious understandings of abortion." In short, he is pro-choice. "There are complexities and ambiguities in life," said Troeger, "that no organized human society should be empowered to rule over the conscience." One might observe that John Calhoun could not have said it better but, in fact, he was considerably more articulate in his defense of slaveholding.

■ John Thavis is Rome bureau chief for *Catholic News Service* and reviews, critically, *His Holiness* by Carl Bernstein and Marco Politi. Tavis writes: "His fourth trip to his homeland in 1991 is presented here as a moment of ultimate betrayal, as a crowd listens with detachment while the Pope shouts out his denouncement of abortion. 'This people worships me with its lips, but not in the depths of its heart,' the Pope is quoted as saying. A poignant moment and a great quote, if it's accurate. But, as elsewhere, the book offers no specific attribution." Perhaps some philanthropic Catholic could send a Bible to the Rome bureau, marking Isaiah 29:13.

■ The mischievous Michael Lind's book of the month, *Up From Conservatism*, might confuse people on a number of scores, including his claim that there is no crisis of illegitimate births. He contends that there is no change in the last fifty years in the percentage of births out of wedlock; there only seems to be because birth rates among married couples have dramatically declined. This is poppycock, as carefully explained by John DiIulio of Princeton in the October 21, 1996 *Weekly Standard.* In the most impacted urban areas of welfare dependency, children born without any father accepting responsibility for them approaches 90 percent of all births. Examining the figures of policy experts across the political spectrum, DiIulio makes a convincing case for a correlation with abortion and contraception, and comes out strongly for, inter alia, bringing back shotgun marriages. Talk about turning the clock back to tell the right time.

■ Stepping down after a distinguished stint as editor of the independent *Lutheran Forum*, Pastor Leonard Klein surveys the state of Lutheranism and of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) in particular, drawing connections with the continuing decline of the oldline Protestant denominations. Klein is one of many "evangelical catholics" in Lutheranism espousing what might be called the originalist position that the Lutheran reform is to be a movement within and for the one Church of the West. The vision of "reclaiming Lutheranism's catholicity," he writes, depends upon "a reconstruction of normative ethics, legitimate authority, and a lively sense of the communion of saints." Against that vision, the denominational machinery in Lutheranism and other oldline churches is "married to the status quo." Klein is not

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terribly sanguine about the likelihood of reform, but "one encouraging sign . . . is that the denominations show increasing signs of exhaustion. In their bankruptcy lies hope." That is a turn on the old reformist or revolutionary maxim, The worse things get the better things get. It is true that the prospect of catastrophe can trigger radical change. More commonly, however, a long course of decline and drift ends up in institutions disappearing with a whimper rather than a bang. In any event, the work of *Lutheran Forum* and cognate efforts among Methodists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and others make certain that, whatever the future of the oldline bodies, they did not lack prophetic warning.

■ "The Tillichian Spell: Memories of a Student Mesmerized in the 1950s." That's the title of a reflection by Tom F. Driver, who was for many years the Paul Tillich Professor of Theology and Culture at Union Seminary, New York. Tillich was known as an apologetic theologian. Driver writes, "I felt that his apologia was not addressed to unbelievers nearly so much as to persons like me who had been Christian all our lives and had now come to a time when we did not really know what Christianity was about, for it seemed so at odds with our culture." The comment reflects the confusion of generations of liberal Christians brought up to assume a neat fit between faith and culture. When culture and Christianity were at odds, it was Christianity that was thrown into question. Although Driver says his background was in liberal Methodism, "that was in the South where the surrounding population tended toward fundamentalism." Fundamentalism was in the 1950s and is now the great bugaboo for liberal Christians. Oldline Protestantism is riddled through and through with the consequences of "the narrow escape syndrome." Press the most flamingly liberal theologian and he will almost always have a story to tell about having narrowly escaped from fundamentalism of one sort or another. And it is usually evident that he fears the possibility of being drawn back into its thrall. The same is true today of liberal Catholics who regale all who will listen with stories about the bad old days of "the pre-Vatican II Church." Catholic priests and religious fret, too, about any association with conservative Protestants on questions such as abortion, lest they be drawn into the orbit of what they view as the fundamentalism of the unspeakable "religious right." For Catholics who think of themselves as victims of the narrow escape syndrome, the new ecumenism with evangelicals poses the double threat of both Catholic and Protestant fundamentalism. Tom Driver's long career almost perfectly exemplifies the liberal propensity to split the difference between Christian faith and cultural respectability, with the benefit of the doubt usually given to culture. Driver's reminiscence ends with a story. Twelve years after Tillich's death, Driver published a book that was somewhat critical of his teacher. At a discussion of the book at Union, a colleague contrived a telegram from Tillich, with accent and all, and read it at the beginning of the meeting. "Dear Tom Driver: I am zo zorry zat I cannot be wiz you ziss evening, because I am detained elzevere. But I haf read ze book zat you haf written, and I zend my congratulazions. It is good to know zat you do not follow your teacher like a slave but zat you haf ze courage to go into ze deep waters and to *sink* for yourself. [signed] Paul Tillich."

■ We vote our fears. And a very good thing that we do, according to the formidable Dennis Prager. In his newsletter, he lists the major interest groups of the two major parties and then suggests that we ask ourselves: "If all the listed Republican groups had their way, what would happen to America? If all the listed Democratic groups had their way, what would happen to America?" Mr. Prager asked himself and concluded that, while he supports almost none of the organizations on the Republican list, he fears them less than the groups on the Democratic list, and so he "nearly always" votes Republican. Here are his lists. *Republican*: National Rifle Association, Christian Coalition and Religious Right, Big Business, Black Conservatives (e.g., Clarence Thomas), Pro-Life Organizations, Conservative Justices, Tobacco Companies. *Democrats*: American Civil Liberties Union, Hollywood, Teachers' Unions, Black Leaders (e.g., Jesse Jackson), Feminist Organizations, Liberal Justices, Trial Lawyers, Alcohol Companies.

■ "So now you're against hungry children." No, no, I'm against using hungry children in hype aimed at expanding statist programs. This clarification is prompted by another report from Bread for the World (BFW) that hunger in the world has decreased in the past twenty years, except in Africa and the United States. In the United States? Yes, says BFW, despite more than five trillion dollars spent on combating poverty in recent decades, there are more poor people than ever. According to BFW, all the children who are in homes under the poverty level are hungry. Hunger is defined as "having inadequate access to food so as to consume fewer calories than required for an active and healthy life." This is rampant nonsense. Having a healthy diet is one thing; having "access" to a healthy diet is another. Numerous medical reports suggest that millions of children in the U.S., the great majority of them not in poverty, do not eat properly. Not because they do not have access to good food but because their parents let them indulge their appetite for junk food. There is no evidence that American children in poverty eat less food than other children. Of course there are hungry children—because their parents neglect them, because the money is spent on drugs and liquor, because many things. But it is very

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doubtful that in the U.S. there is a significant number of hungry children simply because there is not money to buy food. Many years ago, I was a cofounder of BFW and early on argued against the deceptive practice of exploiting suffering in order to promote the statist poverty industry. That argument was lost, and this "Christian citizens lobby for world hunger" embraced the doctrine that charity is out and government action is in. The mantra is endlessly repeated that a dollar spent on helping the poor is only a dollar, while a dollar spent in lobbying the government can produce millions in government programming. Thus BFW, a wonderful idea, became but another inside-the-beltway lobby for feeding the insatiable appetite of the behemoth that is the modern state. 'Tis a great pity.

■ Although nominally second-in-command, some thought Father Vincent O'Keefe was the dominant force at Jesuit headquarters in Rome during the seventies and early eighties. He figures prominently as a critic of John Paul II in *His Holiness*, the recent book by Carl Bernstein and Marco Politi. The authors write: "[Archbishop Rembert] Weakland and others, however, are convinced that John Paul's doctrinal rigidity has also driven out of the Church large numbers of Catholics who otherwise would have wished to remain it it. 'A lot of people feel, rather than this heavy-handed dogmatic approach, he should take a pastoral approach,' says Father Vincent O'Keefe, a former vicar general of the Jesuits who had his own struggles with Wojtyla." While some observers believe that this pontificate has been more sympathetically attentive to Catholicism in the United States than any in history, Fr. O'Keefe is of a decidedly different view. "O'Keefe, like many American bishops, believes the Pope has a cultural bias, that 'he has a really deep antagonism to the West, certainly towards the United States. I think he feels we're too materialistic, we're too loud, we talk too much, we're spoiled.' The Jesuit father asks, 'How available is he for this universal Church that a lot of us are looking for? That was the great thing at Vatican II. That was the first time you had a universal Church in action.'" The suggestion that the universal Church began almost two thousand years after its founding is curious. Less entertaining is the charge that a Pope who had his giblets shot out by a would-be assassin and has undergone several serious surgeries and yet continues to travel relentlessly to almost every corner of the globe, in addition to receiving each week hundreds of people from all over the world, is not "available" to the universal Church. Charity invites the thought that Fr. O'Keefe was misquoted.

■ The Bible wins hands down when people are asked what is "the most influential book in human history." The Bible gets a 79.8 percent rating, followed by Dr. Spock's baby book (4.7 percent), Darwin's *Origin of Species* (4.1), Orwell's *1984* (2.4) and Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* (0.8). Nonetheless, people in the industry report that Bible sales are down. The King James still sells best, but recent decades have witnessed a plethora of translations aimed at boosting sales by catering to almost every imaginable niche—Bibles for runners, new mothers, teenagers, corporate executives, and children of dysfunctional families (which by today's definition is a niche that includes nearly everybody). Dumbing down is at the heart of sales strategies. Last fall Zondervan brought out its New International Bible. Of Bibles on the market for adults, it is geared to the lowest reading level: third grade. This is for adults, mind you. I expect future historians will count as one of the great degradations of our era the loss of a common biblical vocabulary. We can, in largest part, thank the Bible industry for that. Of course they piously claim, and some no doubt sincerely believe, that they are only interested in getting out the message. But this industry, like others, is driven by the bottom line. It would be a blessing beyond measure were it mandated that, for English-speaking Christians, the standard text is the Revised Standard Version (not the *New* RSV), but it seems that is not possible. Even as they read this, the niche-sniffers in the marketing departments at Nelson, Zondervan, and Tyndale may sense an unexploited opportunity: a new Bible for those unhappy with new Bibles.

■ "Most evangelical Protestant churches" do not ordain women, I said in the November issue. Robert Patterson of Prison Fellowship points out that that is, at least technically, not quite right. When on the staff of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE), he did a thorough study of the question and found that only a fraction of member denominations "constitutionally prohibit" the ordination of women. Pentecostal and Holiness groups, which are a majority in the NAE, have historically ordained women, although in recent years the practice has declined. Some Baptists "permit" it, although the Southern Baptist Convention (not an NAE member) seems to be opposed. "Part of the confusion we face on this issue," adds Patterson, "is that, lacking a clear doctrine of the church, evangelicals do not generally have a clear understanding of ordination."

■ A staunch advocate of the abortion license, Mary McGrory of the *Washington Post* drew the line at partial-birth abortion. She expresses puzzlement that the strong opposition of the Catholic bishops and others had so little effect on the last election. She thinks she remembers when a nod or a frown from a cardinal archbishop could determine the outcome of elections. "Clerical clout, it seems, is a thing of the past," she writes. "So is single-issue voting." But there were other factors: "The obvious reason why partial-birth abortion faded as a wedge question that

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could have separated Clinton from Catholic voters is that Dole chose not to bring it up. Before the second debate, he said he would. But he never did. It came up in the vice presidential debate and Jack Kemp gave such a soft answer about the difficulty of consensus that some advocates of banning abortion complained that he was 'almost apologetic' about opposing abortion." Nervous about their tax exemption, the Catholic bishops, unlike many other leaders, stopped far short of anything like an explicit endorsement of candidates. She also thinks the bishops may be reaping the consequences of their long insistence that voters should keep a laundry list of "social justice issues" in mind when they enter the ballot box. She writes: "In April, it seemed that Clinton had gone out of his way to offend Catholics and would pay a heavy price for it." But soon it would become "obvious that Catholics were heeding earlier advice from the bishops to take into account a number of social issues. Catholics who were captivated by Ronald Reagan were lured back to the Democrats by Clinton's initiatives on crime and education. The strictness implicit in his espousal of curfews, school uniforms, and 'V-chips' also helped bring them around. Liberals were grateful that a President from the South could discuss crime without a whisper of race. The only visible penalty that Clinton has paid has been to be left off the guest list of the Alfred E. Smith dinner, the high gala of the hierarchy and the political establishment that is an annual event in New York City. But Vice President Gore, who subscribes fully to Clinton's views, was invited and appeared to trade jibes with Jack Kemp. Little notice was paid, and partial-birth abortion has been consigned to the cemetery of Dole issues like character, liberalism, trust, campaign sleaze, failure to wear the uniform, Clinton press fans, and the balanced budget."

■ Among the things it may be better not to know is the story in the December 1996 issue of *Penthouse*. Suffice it that a group of Episcopalian priests in Brooklyn reportedly have been for some time importing boys from Brazil to engage in orgies at the altar, including S&M and Satanic frolics that push the limits of the grotesque. The suggestion is that the bishop of Long Island was not uninformed about what was going on. The Brooklyn cleric who is at the center of the story denies some of the charges and says he is suing *Penthouse*. The bishop has announced he is taking a leave of absence. A large number of Episcopalian bishops have in response to the story issued a statement, "Where It Is Corrupt, Purify It." They take note of the recent Righter trial, which concluded that there is nothing in the church's teaching against ordaining gay clergy, and of the many statements of Presiding Bishop Edmond Browning trumpeting gay rights. "In a Church in which nearly half of the active bishops have declared their support—in principle—of the ordination of non-celibate homosexual persons, we must not be surprised when some of their clergy take them at their word," the statement asserts. One of the priests involved in the Brooklyn goings-on is a member of Bishop Browning's staff. The protesting bishops call for a thorough investigation and for the Episcopal Church "to provide clear and binding standards regarding the sexual behavior of clergy." Under Browning's administration, it seems the church has had hardly a month without some major scandal, fiscal or sexual, and some Episcopal clergy and laity are agitating for his resignation and replacement by an interim leadership that can bring a measure of order to a deeply troubled and demoralized communion. Please note that nothing said here should encourage anyone to buy *Penthouse*. There is nothing to be learned from it. Just imagine the malformed libido run amuck, and you have the story.

■ The "revitalization" of organized labor has been a big item in the press since the ascendancy of John Sweeney to the presidency of the AFL-CIO. And there does seem to be a lot of frenetic activity, even if it is not clear how such activity relates to the interests of American workers. There is, for instance, this report from a Washington think tank: "As part of its efforts to 'build solidarity among many kinds of movements,' organized labor gave its blessing to an April 1996 'Summit on Ethics and Meaning' organized by Michael Lerner, a 1960s radical who has emerged more recently as a sort of New Age 'politics of meaning' guru to Hillary Clinton. AFL-CIO President Sweeney was the featured dinner speaker at the conference, which was convened by, among others, People for the American Way, the *Utne Reader*, the Institute for Policy Studies, and Planned Parenthood of America's Clergy Advisory Board. In his speech, Sweeney declared that participants in the conference were the 'core of a progressive coalition that will expand the frontiers of social justice.' One of the key goals of the conference was to educate the public about 'the deprivation of meaning in daily life, and how our hunger for meaning is used and manipulated by racist, xenophobic, nationalist, fascist, and fundamentalist religious groups in ways that set people against each other.' The AFL-CIO's bias was made even clearer by an attack in the AFL-CIO *News* on the Christian Coalition, the American Family Association, Focus on the Family, the Family Research Council, and the National Association of Christian Educators. The AFL-CIO *News* alleged that these 'religious extremists pose a significant threat to those candidates who would best represent America's working families.' At the same time, the AFL-CIO and the Letter Carriers Union have given political action committee donations to the quasi-religious Natural Law Party. This party, founded by adherents of the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, claims that

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a few government-run centers for Transcendental Meditation would reduce crime, illness, terrorism, and war by reducing the global stress level. Professionals skilled in the meditative technique allegedly can become smarter, halt the aging process, and levitate." Having spent, with little effect, $35 million (some say more than twice that much) of union members' dues in trying to defeat Republican members of Congress, it is perhaps not surprising that the AFL-CIO has developed an interest in defying gravity.

■ During the election campaign, it came out that billionaire Mohammed Riady of Indonesia and the Lippo Group had remarkable access to the White House, frequently discussing substantive policy with President Clinton and top aides. Indonesia is one of the worst human rights violators in the world, and the hundreds of thousands slaughtered in East Timor by Indonesia's Muslim government were mostly Christian. Catholic Bishop Carlos Filipe Ximenes Belo last year won the Nobel Prize for his defense of persecuted Christians. The Clinton Administration has appointed a State Department committee of religious and human rights leaders to study the problem of persecuted Christians in East Timor and elsewhere in the world. The committee will issue a report. Michael Horowitz of the Hudson Institute, who has been championing the cause of religious freedom, fears the Administration's thinking is, "Let's appoint a committee, and the problem will go away." One hopes he is wrong, but the Indonesian and Chinese connections that poured millions into Democratic campaign coffers are probably not so dumb as not to know what they were buying.

■ Before and after every election, the pro-abortion media (meaning almost all the prestige media) declare that abortion is no longer a big issue, and then go on to say that candidates opposing abortion are hurt by that position. *Washington Post* columnist Mark Shields is unconvinced. He cites a huge *Los Angeles Times* survey of people leaving their polling places that found that 9 percent of voters said abortion was the "most important" factor in their presidential decision. That includes, of course, both those who favor and those who oppose the abortion license. Of that 9 percent (8.3 million voters), 60 percent favored Bob Dole and 34 percent Bill Clinton. Shields cites a journalistic colleague who says, "When abortion rights supporters win, it's perhaps more easily accepted than it should be that their pro-choice position was the reason; and when pro-life candidates win, it is more easily accepted than it should be that abortion was irrelevant to the outcome." Shields comments that in the last election "abortion was quite relevant to 8.3 million American voters, and Bob Dole carried them over Bill Clinton by nearly 2.5 million votes." "That," he adds, "qualifies as a mini-landslide."

■ You may remember the controversy over the long and detailed 1986 pastoral letter of the Catholic bishops, "Economic Justice for All." With considerable justice, the pastoral was sharply criticized by economists and others as an egregious instance of prelates getting in way over their heads. Some journalists had fun pointing out that bishops they interviewed didn't know the difference between marginal tax rates and deficit financing, although they had voted in favor of episcopal pronouncements on these and numerous other questions. At their meeting last November, the tenth anniversary of the pastoral, the bishops issued a short document called "A Catholic Framework for Economic Life." Some papers inaccurately reported that the bishops had simply reaffirmed the principles of the 1986 pastoral. In fact, the new document is just that, new. It was drawn up in consultation also with some of the critics of the 1986 statement, and sets forth ten propositions that are, I think, worthy of very careful consideration. Here they are: "1. The economy exists for the person, not the person for the economy. 2. All economic life should be shaped by moral principles. Economic choices and institutions must be judged by how they protect or undermine the life and dignity of the human person, support the family, and serve the common good. 3. A fundamental moral measure of any economy is how the poor and vulnerable are faring. 4. All people have a right to life and to secure the basic necessities of life (e.g., food, clothing, shelter, education, health care, safe environment, economic security). 5. All people have the right to economic initiative, to productive work, to just wages and benefits, to decent working conditions, as well as to organize and join unions or other associations. 6. All people, to the extent they are able, have a corresponding duty to work, a responsibility to provide for the needs of their families, and an obligation to contribute to the broader society. 7. In economic life, free markets have both clear advantages and limits; government has essential responsibilities and limitations; volunteer groups have irreplaceable roles, but cannot substitute for the proper working of the market or the just policies of the state. 8. Society has a moral obligation, including governmental action when necessary, to assure opportunity, meet basic human needs, and pursue justice in economic life. 9. Workers, owners, managers, stockholders, and consumers are moral agents in economic life. By our choices, initiative, creativity, and investment, we enhance or diminish economic opportunity, community life, and social justice. 10. The global economy has moral dimensions and human consequences. Decisions on investment, trade, aid, and development should protect human life and promote human rights, especially for those most in need wherever they might live on this globe." Of

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course these principles are very general. That is what principles are supposed to be. That they are general does not mean that they are vapid. Those who, unlike bishops, have the public responsibility of filling in the details will find, if they take them seriously, that the ten propositions do not lack a cutting edge.

■ Dialogue is a lovely word, but it often seems that those most enamored of it are chary of practicing it. As readers know, I keep an eye on numerous publications—including such as *America*, *Commonweal*, *Christianity Today*, and *Christian Century*—and frequently comment on what appears in them. Although FT has a larger range of readers and interests than, for example, those four, we try to pay serious attention to their worlds. Each of them, however, seems to plod along in its own track, maintaining an enclosed universe of discourse. Even within their worlds, the inclination is to ignore the disagreeable. I am asked, for instance, what *America*, a Jesuit publication, has had to say about the scandal, first reported in *Catholic World Report*, of the New England Province's mendacity and defiance of Rome in supporting the pro-abortion political career of Father Robert Drinan. The answer to date is: nothing. Maybe the assumption is that *America* readers only read *America* and are not aware of what appears elsewhere. The *National Catholic Reporter*, which maintains an image of leftist muckraking, has not touched the story and continues to carry a column by Fr. Drinan as though nothing has happened. Other examples can readily be multiplied. There are numerous publications out there and nobody can read all of them, but the editors of most of them seem to read none of them except their own. Among the purposes of such publications, one would think, is the joining of civil argument—as in "dialogue." Some editors may be reluctant to give attention to what they view as their "competition," but I believe that is a mistake, as witness the gratifying success of FT that is forever drawing attention to what is said elsewhere. While polemic and simple assertion are sometimes appropriate, the persuasiveness of an argument depends in large part upon the evidence that alternative arguments have been taken into account. That, presumably, is what dialogue does, but it is disappointingly absent from some publications that chatter incessantly about the importance of dialogue. Not, I quickly add, that FT is without fault on this score, but we work at it, and invite other editors to at least embrace the goal. It would also make going through all those publications somewhat more scintillating if they were talking with one another. Remaining within their enclosed discourses no doubt has its attractions, but our experience suggests that the livelier and better the public argument the more interested readers there will be for everyone. So put me down as strongly in favor of dialogue.

■ It was a handsome coffee mug in the bookstore of a university I was visiting, and I had my money out when I noticed on the bottom, "Made in China." No thanks. My gesture will make no discernible difference to U.S. businesses exploiting slave labor, but one must do something. A. M. (Abe) Rosenthal is a real bulldog on the subject and keeps coming back to it in his column in the *Times* of the Big Bagel (as Taki of *Spectator* notoriety calls our town). A recent column begins, "America at election time: two Chamberlains and not a Churchill in sight." A touch of hyperbole? Not really. What China is doing to its own people and Tibet—and is probably getting ready to do in Hong Kong—is monstrous. Recent months have witnessed a renewed and massive crackdown on Christians, Protestant and Catholic, but few here seem to take notice. Clinton had promised to do his peaceful best to address human rights violations in China, but on May 28, 1993, he abandoned that promise, fatuously claiming that economic engagement with China would improve the lot of everyone. Some thought it reminiscent of Reagan's "constructive engagement" with South Africa under apartheid, but the parallel does not hold. A good case was made at the time, and it is strengthened in retrospect, that constructive engagement did contribute to the toppling of the apartheid regime. Not so with China. Rosenthal writes, "From that day in May when Mr. Clinton publicly and without apparent shame canceled his own promise to use tariff pressure for human liberties, there was no doubt what would happen. The incarceration and torture meted out to dissidents in China increased. So did China's military strength and influence abroad." Many of the biggest enterprises in China are in fact owned by the military, and there is no shortage of documentation that the regime is brazenly using U.S. contracts to build up its military, while insisting that nobody has a right to "interfere" in its internal affairs. And of course corporations argue that, if the U.S. was not getting the trade, other countries would. Some of us are still of the quaint view that America should be different, and should be willing to pay a price for it. Rosenthal again: "At least the Communists are true to their own principles and system. Repression is the government's bloodstream. Tens of millions have sweated their lives away in slave labor camps. Thousands of political prisoners are still incarcerated." I don't feel righteous about doing without that mug, but with it I know the morning coffee would get the day off to a sleazy start. For further grist for the mills of your intercessory prayer, you might send for "Anthems of Defeat" (Asia Watch, 485 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10017).

■ Martin E. Marty cites Max Scheler's observation that the apostate is one "who is engaged in a continuous chain of acts of revenge against his own spiritual past." Marty offers as examples Thomas

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Cranmer, Malcolm Muggeridge, and Methodist theologian Thomas Oden. Cranmer persecuted those who held the views he would later embrace; after a long life of lechery, Muggeridge was converted to the faith and spent his remaining years excoriating lechers; Oden is sharply critical of the theological liberalism he once espoused. Marty comments: "Cranmer turned often, Muggeridge cannot turn again, and Oden is likely to stay put this time—while the rest of us try to unlearn what they taught us so eloquently before their various turns." I doubt that Marty was ever taught by Oden and, while he has been around for a long time, he surely did not sit at the feet of Cranmer. As for learning lechery from Muggeridge, I don't believe it for a moment.

■ You know that I do a lot of hanging around with evangelical Protestants and it is, as they say, a blessing. But I do have a complaint that I've hesitated to bring up, so I'm grateful that Randall J. VanderMey, who teaches English at Westmont College in Santa Barbara, has said it better than I could. This is from "Phrase the Lord" in a recent issue of *New Man*, the publication of Promise Keepers: "Suppose all Christians wore uniforms simply because they saw others wearing them and figured it must be the Christian way. Once that trend got started, we would know they were Christians by their . . . love? No, by their plaid Bermudas, bow ties, and little beanies. I know, that's silly. But have you ever noticed how we Christians sometimes wear funny little verbal 'uniforms'? They're otherwise known as Christian clichés, Christian lingo, Christianese, Christian jargon, or God talk. I'm talking about a word like 'just,' which often shows up in prayer, as in, 'Father God, I *just* want to pray right now, Lord. . . .' A couple of years ago, I went on radio talk shows across the country discussing the spiritual costs of 'God talk.' What do you suppose was the number one verbal mannerism my callers complained about? Surprise: it was that little word 'just.' It struck listeners' ears as an irritating bit of false humility. The phrase 'right now' qualifies as evangelical lingo, too. So does the distracting habit of inserting the word 'Lord' after almost every other phrase in prayer. You could make your own list of Christian phrases that have gone dull. In church, after listening to 'special music,' we 'share joys and concerns.' Then we 'come before our Maker in prayer.' So-and-so is a great 'prayer warrior.' She provides 'prayer cover' and asks for a 'hedge of

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protection' around the young couple who just had their first 'gift from God.' The pastor has a 'heart for missions.' The television evangelist says, 'Let go and Let God.' God, we say, has a 'wonderful plan for your life.' He 'never sends us burdens greater than we can bear.' We greet one another with 'how's your walk?' and admonish one another to 'walk your talk.' We ask others, 'Have you had your quiet time?' If the answer is yes, it's 'Praise the Lord.' If no, it's 'I'll pray for you.' Is spiritual groupthink and groupspeak the way of the gospel? I don't think so. Men who want to follow Christ in spirit and truth will care when language starts to fail. They'll want to avoid the robotic verbal behavior that deadens the conscience and strikes a cold chill in the observer. How many people are there in dire need of redemption who would not ever consider joining the church because Christians 'talk funny'? How would you feel, cowboy, if you were hanging on a split-rail fence, staring in at the Christian corral, and all the talk you heard sounded like just so much mooing of contented cows? Would you say to yourself, 'Man, I want to join that herd?'"

■ In Krakow, Poland, the sixth annual "Centesimus Annus Seminar on the Free Society." The subject is Catholic social teaching and the challenges of democracy. The faculty includes Michael Novak, George Weigel, Father Maciej Zieba, yours truly, and experts from Central Europe. The dates are July 2 to 18, and there are scholarships for ten Americans. (You pay your own travel.) There are always applications from many times that number, so you should get your bid in early. Applicants must be college seniors or graduate students, and should send a writing sample and curriculum vitae to Brian Anderson at the American Enterprise Institute, 1150 Seventeenth Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20036. *Deadline for applications is May 1.*

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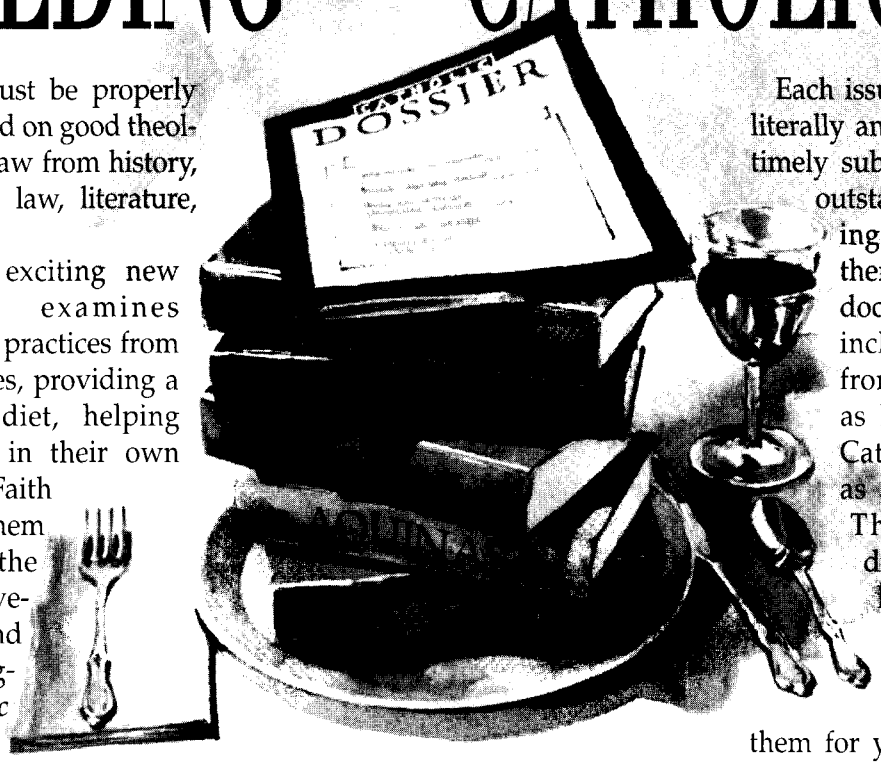

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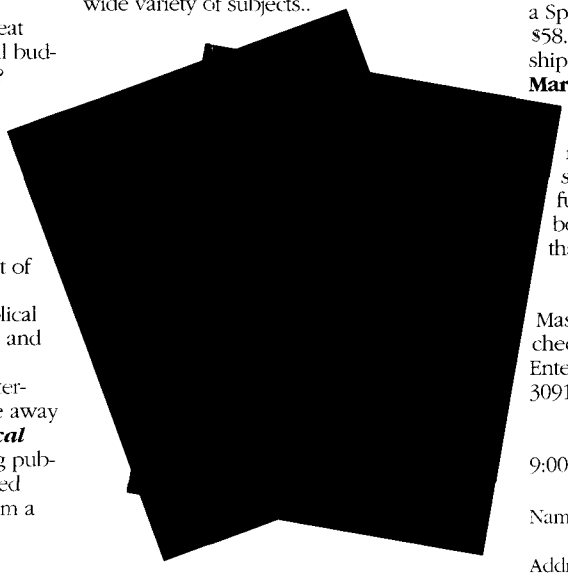

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